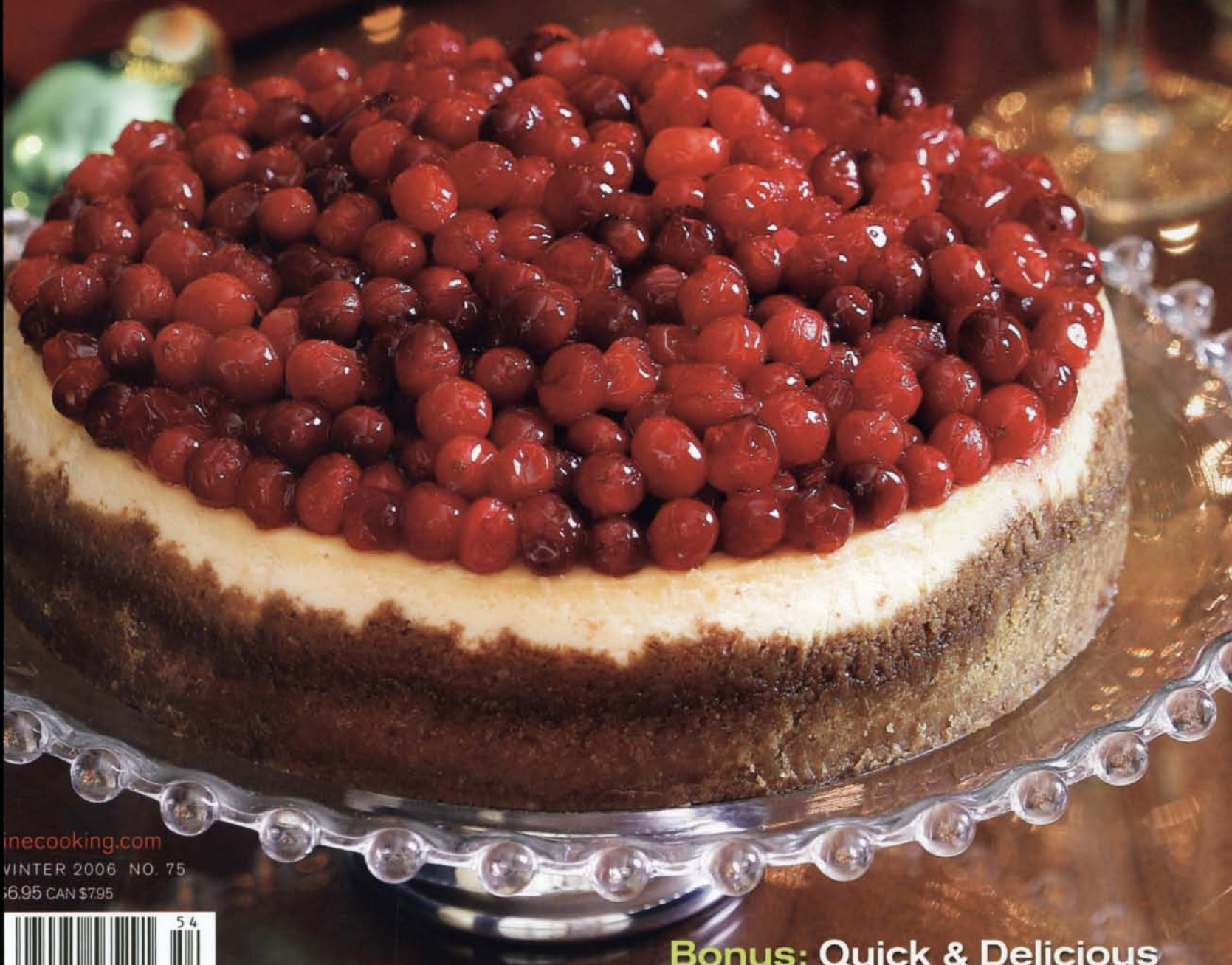


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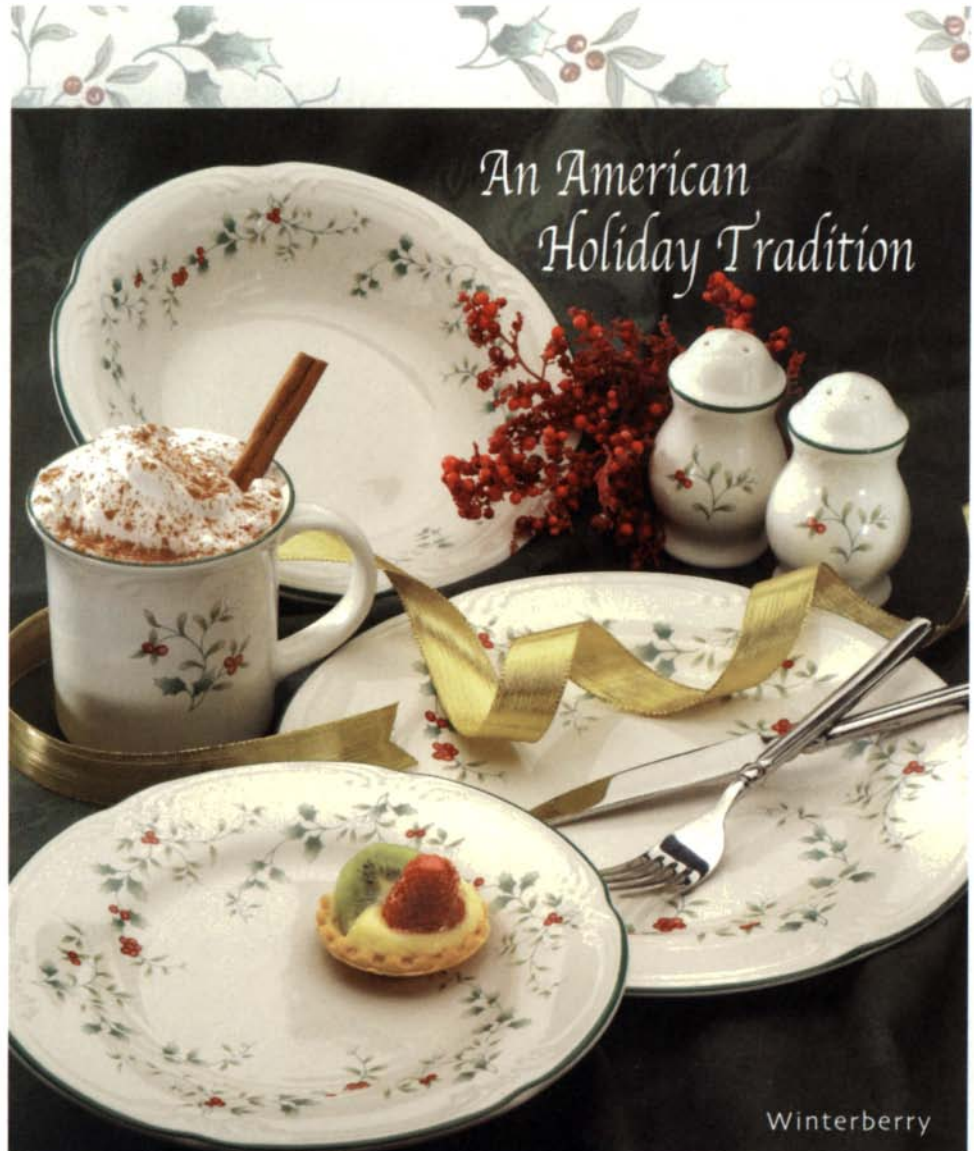
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## RECIPE FOLDOUT

90c Quick & Delicious  
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## ON THE COVER



New York Style Cheesecake with  
Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce, p. 48

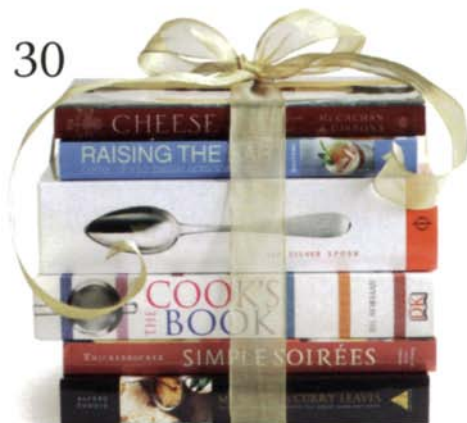
## UP FRONT

- 6 Index
- 8 From the Editor
- 12 Contributors
- 14 Gift Giving  
Soft and chewy honey  
caramels
- 18 Great Finds  
Delicious ideas for  
holiday giving
- 24 Enjoying Wine  
Ten great gifts in a bottle
- 30 Book Reviews
- 32 Gift Giving  
Toasty, crunchy  
homemade granola
- 36 Equipment  
Unique gifts for your  
favorite cook



22

30



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36





50



56



64



70

## FEATURES

- 38 Home for the Holidays**  
For a dinner that's elegant but comforting, a chef puts a new spin on old family favorites  
by Ris Lacoste

- 44 Ginger Gives Delicious Warmth to Cookies**  
Fresh, dried, or crystallized, ginger adds fragrant warmth to more than just gingerbread  
by Abigail Johnson Dodge

- 48 COVER STORY**  
**Everybody Loves Cheesecake**  
...and this one is especially creamy, spectacularly delicious, and topped with a cranberry-Cointreau sauce  
by Nicole Rees

- 50 A Festive Hors d'Oeuvre Party**  
Five hors d'oeuvres add up to a bite-size dinner for sixteen  
by Tasha DeSerio

- 56 Nine Fabulous Cookies from Three Easy Doughs**  
Streamline your holiday cookie baking without sacrificing diversity  
by Alice Medrich

- 64 Come On Over for Brunch**  
On a leisurely morning, delight your friends with a homey menu that everyone will love  
by Nicole Rees

- 70 Inspired Éclairs, Step by Step**  
This bakeshop classic is easier to make than you'd think  
by Carolyn Weil



76

## IN THE BACK

- 76 From Our Test Kitchen**  
❖ Skinning hazelnuts  
❖ Filling a pastry bag  
❖ All about cream  
❖ Measuring sticky ingredients  
❖ Rescuing overwhipped cream
- 86 Where To Buy It**
- 84 Shopping Guide**
- 90 Nutrition Information**



78



80



- ◆ Quick (under 45 minutes)
- ◆ Make ahead
- ◆ Vegetarian
- ◆ Baking

## 32 *Toasty Homemade Granola*



## recipes

### Cover Recipe

- ◆◆◆ New York Style Cheesecake with Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce, 49

### Appetizers & Beverages

- ◆◆ Caramelized Onion & Thyme Tarts, 54
- ◆◆ Creamy Roquefort Dip, 52
- ◆◆ Crudités with Creamy Roquefort Dip, 52
- ◆ Smoked Salmon on Belgian Endive with Crème Fraîche & Chives, 53
- ◆◆ Sparkling Pomegranate Cocktail, 67
- ◆◆ Spiced Mixed Nuts, 90c
- ◆ Stuffed Mushrooms with Pancetta, Shallots & Sage, 55

### Meat, Poultry, Fish & Shellfish

- ◆◆ Mustard, Sage & Maple-Glazed Pork Roast with Garlic-Roasted Potatoes, 41
- ◆ Prosciutto-Wrapped Halibut with Sage Butter Sauce, 90c
- ◆ Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Caramelized Shallots & Red Wine, 90c

### Salads

- ◆◆ Boston Lettuce Wedges with Mimosa Vinaigrette, 90c
- ◆◆ Mixed Greens with Goat Cheese & Orange-Fennel Seed Vinaigrette, 90c

### Side Dishes

- ◆◆ Broccoli with Black Olives, Garlic & Lemon, 90c
- ◆◆ Smashed Parslief Potatoes, 90c
- ◆ Sweet-Sour Red Cabbage, 42

### Sauces, Condiments & Seasonings

- ◆◆ Sage, Maple & Mustard Glaze, 41
- ◆◆ Sugar Syrup, 67

### Soups

- ◆◆ Silky Leek & Celery Root Soup, 53
- ◆ Wild Rice & Mushroom Soup with Almonds, 40

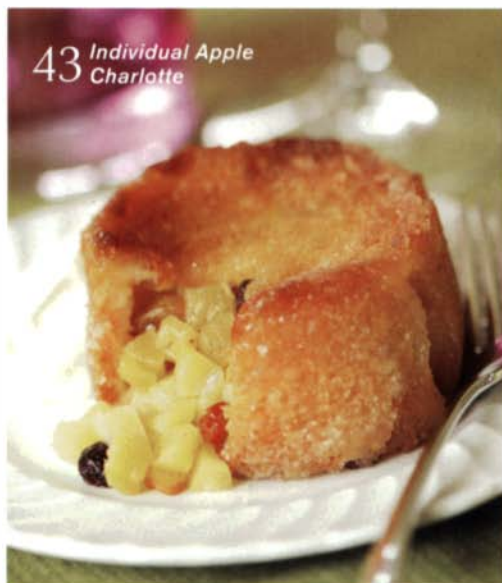
### Breakfast & Brunch

- ◆ Apple, Sage & Fennel Breakfast Sausage, 67
- ◆◆ Crispy Sweet Pecan Granola, 34
- ◆ Hazelnut Waffles, 68
- ◆ Honey Almond Granola, 34
- ◆ Maple Walnut Granola with Dates, 34
- ◆ Spinach & Mushroom Frittata, 66

### Desserts, Cakes, Pastry & Candy

- ◆◆◆ Almond Cookie Dough, 58
- ◆◆ Almond Sablés, 59
- ◆◆ Berry Compote, 69
- ◆◆ Bittersweet Ganache, 74
- ◆◆ Bittersweet Mocha Cookies, 63
- ◆◆ Brownie Bowties, 61
- ◆◆ Brownie Filling for Bowties, 61
- ◆◆ Caramel-Glazed Cardamom Palmiers, 61
- ◆◆ Chocolate Filling for Thumbprints, 59
- ◆◆ Chocolate Thumbprints, 59
- ◆◆ Chocolate Chunk Cookies With Dried Cherries & Pecans, 63
- ◆◆ Classic Rugelach, 60
- ◆◆ Cocoa Cookie Dough, 62
- ◆◆ Cream Cheese Dough, 60
- ◆◆ Crème Fraîche Whipped Cream, 69
- ◆◆ Crunchy Cocoa Wafers, 63
- ◆◆ Double Ginger Crackles, 45
- ◆◆ Éclairs, 72
- ◆◆ Éclair Dough (Pâte à Choux), 72
- ◆◆ Ginger Snaps, 47
- ◆◆ Ginger & Lemon Cookies, 47
- ◆◆ Gingerbread Biscotti, 46
- ◆◆ Hazelnut Almond Crescents, 59
- ◆◆ Honey Caramels, 16
- ◆◆ Honey-Nut Caramels, 16
- ◆◆ Individual Apple Charlottes, 43
- ◆◆ New York Style Cheesecake with Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce, 49
- ◆◆ Vanilla Pastry Cream, 74
- ◆◆ Vanilla-Tangerine Caramels, 16
- ◆◆ Whipped Cream, 75

## 43 *Individual Apple Charlotte*



## 90c *Mixed Greens with Goat Cheese & Orange-Fennel Seed Vinaigrette*






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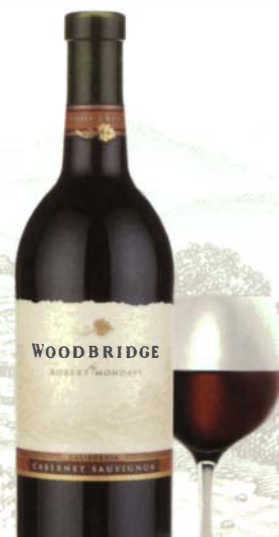
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from the editor

# Something for everyone

When holiday time rolls around, not only does your normal routine turn topsy-turvy, but suddenly your usual cooking repertoire seems, well, not quite sexy enough. One day your office might be having a cookie swap, the next your neighbor is having an open house (please bring a dessert). What if, this year, the family's coming to *your* house for Christmas dinner, or your best friends from college are coming to stay for New Year's weekend? It's almost like you have to take on a new identity for every event: The Entertainer, The Baker, The Gift-Maker. You need help, you need inspiration, you need recipes! To the rescue comes *Fine Cooking's* special holiday issue.

**For the entertainer**, we've got three very different and special menus: A cocktail party where the hors d'oeuvres make the meal; a casual brunch starring waffles and homemade sausages; and a crowd-pleasing holiday dinner of roast pork and potatoes with a very special dessert of mini sugar-robed apple charlottes.

**For the baker**, we've got the best cheesecake any of us have ever tasted. There's a truly stunning collection of Christmas cookies (Alice Medrich's sophisticated take on using one dough for more than one cookie and Abby Dodge's to-die-for ginger cookies). And if you really want to flex your baking muscles, we've got luscious éclairs, with step-by-step instructions and the added bonus that they're mostly make-ahead.

**For the gift-maker**, we have honey caramels, crunchy granola—and all those cookies. And if you'd rather buy your gifts (or if you're making up your own wish list), check out the ideas in our wine, books, and equipment departments.

## And for every time-crunched cook, one last bonus:

In this issue, we've devoted our regular Quick & Delicious section to entertaining. By mixing and matching the seven recipes in this section, you can create a custom menu that's impressive but not fussy. Good luck, and don't forget, we'll all be back to normal in a few weeks.

—Susie Middleton, editor

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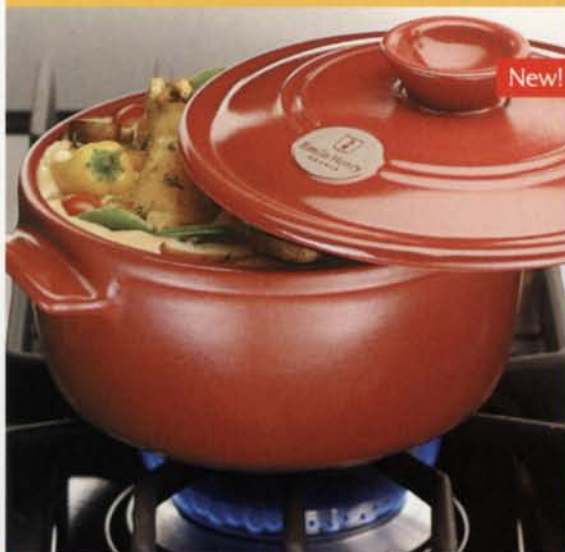
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- ❖ Before you start, read the recipe from start to finish so there are no surprises.
- ❖ Before actually starting to cook or bake, gather all the necessary ingredients and equipment. Prepare the ingredients according to the directions in the ingredient list (see below for more on this).
- ❖ For determining doneness, always rely first on the recipe's sensory descriptor, such as "cook until golden brown." Consider any times given in a recipe merely as a guide for when to start checking for doneness.

### Watch those modifiers

A recipe ingredient list contains words such as "diced" and "chopped" that tell you how to prepare each ingredient for the recipe, but what you may not realize is that the placement of these "preparation modifiers" in the ingredient line is as important as the modifier itself. Take for example the following two similar lines that you may see in a recipe ingredient list:

- 1 cup rice, cooked
- 1 cup cooked rice

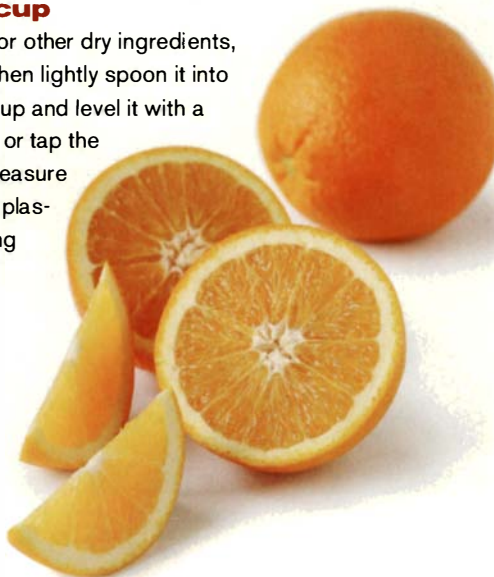
The first line is telling you to take 1 cup of rice and cook it; the second line is calling for 1 cup of rice that has already been cooked. The difference between the two is about 2 cups of cooked rice, and that can make a big difference in the outcome of a recipe.

### Give your oven plenty of time to heat up

Don't rely on your oven's preheat signal; it often goes off prematurely. Instead, let your oven heat for at least 20 minutes before baking anything.

### Use the right measuring cup

To measure flour or other dry ingredients, stir the flour and then lightly spoon it into a dry measuring cup and level it with a knife; don't shake or tap the cup. Be sure to measure liquids in glass or plastic liquid measuring cups.



### Ingredients

Unless otherwise noted, assume that

- butter is unsalted.
- eggs are large (about 2 oz. each).
- flour is unbleached all-purpose (don't sift unless directed to).
- sugar is white granulated.
- fresh herbs, greens, and lettuces are washed and dried.
- garlic, onions, and fresh ginger are peeled.



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# contributors

**Ris Lacoste** ("Home for the Holidays," p. 38) is the award-winning executive chef of 1789 Restaurant in Washington, DC, where she has been cooking since 1995. Despite her busy schedule at the restaurant, Ris volunteers her time for both regional and national causes, including Taste of the Nation, Zoofari, Share our Strength, DC Rape Crisis Center, St. Jude Hospital for Children, and Food and Friends in Washington, and is an active supporter of local farmers' markets. A member of the National Board of Directors for the American Institute of Wine and Food, Ris also serves on the board of and as a mentor for the Marriott Hospitality Public Charter High School.

*Fine Cooking* contributing editor **Abigail Johnson Dodge** ("Ginger Cookies," p. 44) is the author of many cookbooks, including *The Weekend Baker*, *Great Fruit Desserts*, *The Kid's Cookbook*, *Kids' Baking*, *Williams-Sonoma's Dessert*. Abby was the founding director of *Fine Cooking's* test kitchen.

In this issue, we asked frequent *Fine Cooking* contributor **Nicole Rees** ("Cheesecake," p. 48, and "Come On Over for Brunch," p. 64) to focus her talents on the foods she loves most. Her brunch menu features two of her favorite weekend treats—waffles and sparkling wine—and she crowns her impossibly delicious cheesecake with beautiful cranberries. Nicole works as a baker and food technologist in Portland, Oregon, and is the co-author of *Understanding Baking* and *The Baker's Manual*.

**Tasha DeSerio** ("A Festive Hors d'Oeuvre Party," p. 50),

knows that it's hard to be a calm, gracious host when you're madly assembling hors d'oeuvres at the last minute. So she's not only provided us with some fabulous recipes for holiday appetizers, but a strategy for getting the job done, too. Formerly a cook at Chez Panisse Restaurant & Café, Tasha is a cooking teacher, food writer, and the proprietor of Berkeley, California's Olive Green Catering.

**Alice Medrich**, chocolate expert and baker extraordinaire, knows her cookies. Her solution to streamlining holiday cookie baking ("Nine Fabulous Cookies from Three Easy Doughs," p. 56) won us over, not just for its cleverness but also for the cookies themselves, which are all so delicious yet so different. Alice is the only person to be a three-time Cookbook of the Year award winner (twice from the James Beard Foundation, and recently, for *Bittersweet*, from the International Association of Culinary Professionals). Her latest book, *Chocolate Holidays*, is a revised edition of one of her earlier books, *A Year in Chocolate*.

If there's one thing **Carolyn Weil** ("Impressive Éclairs, Step by Step," p. 70) loves more than baking, it's teaching others to bake. Carolyn was the first pastry chef at the acclaimed Stars restaurant in San Francisco and, later, the owner of The Bakeshop, a popular Berkeley bakery, where éclairs were a menu staple. A contributor to *The Baker's Dozen Cookbook*, Carolyn has written two books for the Williams-Sonoma Collection, *Pie & Tart* and *Fruit Desserts*, and is at work on a third, *Sweet Treats*, a cookbook for 9- to 12-year-olds.



Ris Lacoste



Nicole Rees



Alice Medrich



Tasha DeSerio



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# Soft & Chewy Honey Caramels

These easy candies are as addictive to eat as they are fun to give

BY JENNIFER DAVIS

Fruitcake may be traditional and cookies well-loved, but for a truly special holiday gift, treat your friends to homemade caramels. With a few tools and the recipe on p. 16, you can easily make the best caramels your friends and family will ever taste.

This caramel recipe is one of my favorites: It has the buttery sweetness of a classic caramel candy, but the addition of honey lifts the flavor out of the ordinary. The honey also happens to make this recipe more forgiving, helping to keep the caramel smooth.

**Follow a few rules and success is yours.** Caramel candies have a reputation for being difficult. They shouldn't. Sure, there are a few stumbling blocks, but my recipe is designed to help you avoid them. The biggest hazard you face is that instead of being soft and smooth, your caramel will turn rough and grainy from the sugar recrystallizing as it cools. The honey in my recipe helps prevent this, as does bringing the sugars to a very high heat before adding the cream. Beyond that, just follow my instructions: Stir when the recipe says to stir; stop when it says stop. And above all, avoid the temptation, no matter how strong, to scrape out the pot at the end. Your reward will be soft, rich caramels.

**Simple additions create new flavor twists.** Once you master the basic recipe, it's easy to personalize your caramels with flavorings or mix-ins. I've included two of my favorite variations to get you started. The **vanilla-tangerine version** balances the brightness of tangerine and the complex sweetness of honey and vanilla. It also demonstrates the best way to add citrus zest to caramel: at the end of cooking so that the high heat doesn't degrade its flavor. The **honey-nut variation**, aside from being truly addictive and my personal favorite, shows how easy it is to add tasty mix-ins to your caramels.

(Continued on p. 16)



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Before you get started, be sure you have all the equipment:

- ❖ 8x8-inch square pan
- ❖ small saucepan
- ❖ large pot, at least 4-quart capacity
- ❖ long-handled wooden or silicone spoon (don't use metal or you'll burn yourself while stirring)
- ❖ candy thermometer (for sources, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86)
- ❖ pastry brush
- ❖ candy wrappers (for sources, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 86)

## Honey Caramels, with Honey-Nut and Vanilla-Tangerine Variations

*Yields about a hundred 3/4-inch-square caramels.*

**1 2/3 cups heavy cream**  
**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**1 1/2 cups granulated sugar**  
**4 1/2 ounces (1/4 cup plus 3 table-  
 spoons) honey**  
**1 1/2 ounces (3 tablespoons)  
 unsalted butter, at room  
 temperature; more for the pan**  
**1/2 teaspoon table salt**

**FOR THE HONEY-NUT VERSION:**  
**5 1/2 ounces (1 to 1 1/4 cups) whole  
 salted mixed nuts (don't use a  
 mixture containing peanuts—  
 they'll overwhelm the flavor  
 of the other nuts), very lightly  
 toasted to refresh the flavors**

**FOR THE VANILLA-TANGERINE  
 VERSION:**

**Finely grated zest of 2 tange-  
 rines (about 2 tablespoons  
 plus 1 teaspoon)**

Butter an 8x8-inch baking pan, line the bottom with parchment, and butter the parchment well (see the photo at bottom left). Don't worry if the parchment pops up a bit, the weight of the caramel will press it back down.

**If making honey-nut cara-  
 mels, scatter the nuts evenly  
 over the bottom of the pan.**

In a small saucepan, heat the cream with the vanilla over

medium heat until it comes to a simmer. Reduce the heat to very low and keep the cream hot.

Heat the sugar with the honey in a 4-quart or larger saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally with a long-handled wooden spoon, until the sugar is mostly dissolved and it starts to boil, 4 to 5 minutes.

Stop stirring and brush down the sides of the pot with a clean pastry brush dipped in water to dissolve any clinging sugar crystals (see the second photo from the left, below).

Clip a candy thermometer to the pot and let the mixture boil, without disturbing the bubbling sugar, until it reaches 305°F, 2 to 5 minutes. Rinse any clinging sugar off your spoon and dry it with a towel.

Add the 3 tablespoons butter and the salt. Slowly stir in the warm cream. The mixture will boil furiously and bubble up considerably as soon as you begin adding things: Just keep slowly and steadily pouring in the cream and stirring. By the time all the cream is added, the temperature of the mixture will have started to drop. Continue stirring, watching the thermometer closely, until the

temperature is back up to 250°F. Take the pan off the heat.

**If making vanilla tangerine caramels, stir in the tangerine zest now.**

Immediately pour the hot caramel into the prepared pan. *Do not* scrape the pot. What sticks to the pot should stay in the pot.

**If making honey-nut cara-  
 mels, be sure to keep the pot  
 moving back and forth as you  
 pour so that the nuts don't float  
 away and congregate around  
 the edge of the pan.**

Set the pan on a rack in a cool part of your kitchen. Don't disturb the pan until the caramel is fully cool and set, at least 5 hours, but preferably overnight.

Run a table knife around the edges of the pan and turn the caramel out onto an oiled cutting board. Peel off the parchment. With a chef's knife, cut the caramel into 100 squares (about 3/4 inch each) and wrap them snugly in cellophane or other candy wrappers. Once cut, the caramels will slowly lose their shape, so it's important to wrap them right away.

The wrapped caramels will keep for about four weeks if stored in an airtight container at room temperature.

## Tips for caramel-making success

Caramels aren't difficult; they just need you to be attentive. You'll get excellent results if you simply take extra care at a few crucial points in the process.



*Start by buttering the pan (and parchment) so that the caramels will release easily later.*



*Brush the sides of the pot with a wet pastry brush to dissolve stray sugar crystals and to prevent the caramel from recrystallizing.*



*As you stir in the cream, the caramel will boil furiously, so stir with care.*



*Don't scrape the pot when you pour the caramel into the buttered pan or you could cause the caramel to recrystallize.*

*Jennifer Davis owns Samaki Chocolates in Lethbridge, Alberta. ♦*



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## Cheese-tasting made easy

With a cheese board like this one, your guests won't need to guess which cheese is which—just identify each by writing directly on the slate with chalk. To build on your gift, give a cheese-of-the-month club membership or a high-quality cheese knife along with the board. *Vermont slate cheese platters*, \$17 to \$30 at [JKAdams.com](http://JKAdams.com) (866-362-4422).

## A decorating kit with all the basics

We love how easy it is to wrap and give this cake decorating set: All the pieces are packed right in a 9-inch cake pan. Perfect for any baker or novice cake decorator, the 14-piece set comes with pastry bags, decorating tubes, pastry tubes, a coupler, an offset spatula, and a bowl scraper. *Cake decorating set*, \$34.95 at [SurLaTable.com](http://SurLaTable.com) (800-243-0852).



# Delicious ideas for holiday giving

This season, give (or put together) a gift set for your favorite cook or food lover

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN



## Personalize a wine gift

We're sure that any wine lover will appreciate the tools in this set, which include a corkscrew, foil cutter, dripstop ring, and more. But even more fun is the bottle-shaped space inside that lets you add your favorite wine (or any wine you know the recipient will love). *Metrokane Add-a-Wine-Bottle Gift Set*, \$29.95 at [IWAwine.com](http://IWAwine.com) (800-527-4072).

(Continued on p. 20)



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### Black Raspberry Lemon Pudding Pie



1 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Lemon Curd  
1 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Pure Seedless Black Raspberry Preserves  
Graham Cracker Pie Crust, prepared  
2 small boxes Instant Vanilla Pudding Mix  
1 3/4 c. Milk  
1 8-oz. container Whipped Topping

In a large bowl, mix milk and pudding. Beat with a wire whisk till smooth. Stir Curd into pudding, then fold in whipped topping. Pour mixture into pie crust. Chill until set. Soften Preserves with a spoon, then spread on top of pie. Chill. Makes 6-8 servings. Our Lime Curd would also be great in this recipe!



### Apple-Chipotle Shrimp



1 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Apple Butter  
2 Tbsp. Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Lime or Lemon Curd  
1 Tbsp. Balsamic Vinegar  
1 Tbsp. Olive Oil  
1 Tbsp. Chipotle Sauce  
1 tsp. Garlic, minced  
1 1/2 lbs. Peeled & Deveined Shrimp, Tuna or Swordfish

Place all of the ingredients except the seafood in a food processor. Process until marinade is smooth. Place seafood in a large freezer storage bag & marinate 1-2 hours, turning occasionally. Grill or broil seafood. Pour marinade into a small saucepan & cook 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove, brush on seafood every 2-3 minutes while grilling/broiling. Discard marinade. Makes 6-8 servings.



### Apple-Berry Salsa with Cinnamon Chips



1/2 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Apple Butter  
1/2 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Pure Seedless Pacific Mountain<sup>®</sup> Strawberry Preserves  
Salsa: 2 Granny Smith Apples, cored & chopped, 1 or 2 Kiwi, peeled & chopped, 1 Orange (Zest & Juice)  
Chips: 2-3 lg. Flour Tortillas, Water, 1 Tbsp. Sugar, 1/2 tsp. Cinnamon

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brush tortillas with water. Combine sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over tortillas; cut each tortilla into 8 wedges. Place wedges on cookie sheet. Bake 5-7 minutes or until golden brown. Remove and cool. Combine Apple Butter, Preserves, fruits, orange zest and juice in bowl. Serve fruit salsa with cinnamon chips. Makes about 3 cups of salsa.



### Citrus Coconut Trifle



1 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Lemon or Lime Curd  
1 jar Dickinson's<sup>®</sup> Pure Marion Blackberry Preserves  
1 small box Instant Coconut Cream Pudding Mix, prepared as directed  
1 10-oz. Pound or Angel Food Cake  
1 8-oz. container Whipped Topping

Fold Curd into prepared pudding. Cut cake horizontally & spread with Preserves, then cut cake into 1" cubes. In a trifle dish, layer cake, pudding & whipped topping, in that order. Garnish with optional lime peel or mint leaves. Makes 8-10 servings. Try substituting with your favorite flavor of Dickinson's Preserves.



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### An elegant presentation for olive oil

Now that we've used this drizzler, we'll never bring a not-so-pretty bottle of olive oil to the table again. Just place your finger over the hole in the top of the wand to hold in the oil; then lift the wand out of the glass dispenser and remove your finger to drizzle a thin stream of oil over risotto, salads, or crusty bread. To make an extra-special gift, give the drizzler along with a bottle of high-quality estate olive oil. *Dalla piazza olive oil drizzler from Swissmar, \$24.95 at BroadwayPanhandler.com (866-266-5927).*

### A serving piece for little foods

This narrow porcelain olive boat makes a jazzy addition to a serve-ware collection. We'd top off the gift by boxing it up with a jar of fancy brined olives, but it's also great for presenting other nibbles (like nuts and candies), too. *Small porcelain olive boat, \$8.99 at Target.com.*

(Continued on p. 22)



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### Little gifts for a cause

Get into the holiday spirit by stuffing stockings with one or more of these charitable gifts.

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This pretty pink gift set comes with a few handy kitchen essentials—a peeler, a whisk, and a silicone spatula—along with a "pink ribbon" apron. Give the whole set, or give each tool to a different cook. KitchenAid donates a percentage of the sales to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. *Cook for the Cure 4-piece gift set, \$39.99 at ShopKitchenAid.com (800-541-6390).*



### Protect wildlife

These creamy little "bugbites" chocolates are perfect for an afternoon fix, but we like that they're organic and educational, too. (Each comes wrapped with a mini trading card that includes a photo and facts about an insect.) A percentage of the profits goes to environmental groups that protect endangered species. *Bugbites Ladybug gift box, \$11.95 at ChocolateBar.com (800-293-0160).* ♦



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# 10 Great Gifts in a Bottle

BY AMY ALBERT

dry

## Easy-sipping Alsace blend

### Hugel Gentil, \$11

Gentil, a deliciously versatile white wine, makes a fine apéritif; it's a great hostess gift for a cocktail or hors d'oeuvres party. "Gentil" is French for kind, nice, or gentle, and this easy-drinking wine lives up to its name. Gentil is a delicious blend of five Alsace grapes (Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Sylvaner, Muscat, and Pinot Gris), and the price is kind to your wallet, too. In fact, why not buy some as a gift to yourself? Gentil also happens to be great with pork, sushi, and Thai food. Serve chilled. [Frederickwildman.com](http://Frederickwildman.com).

## Dry Vermouth for the best martini (or pan sauces)

### Vya Extra-Dry Vermouth, \$16

For the martini lover, cook, or apéritif maven, a bottle of Vya makes a clever gift. This carefully crafted dry vermouth is especially aromatic, thanks to the addition of botanicals like citrus rind and herbs. It can be used instead of white wine for delicious results in cooking (think pan sauces and

risotto). It's a superb touch for a top-notch martini, and it's delicious, chilled on its own or as an apéritif. For a California version of the classic French cocktail, the Vermouth Kir, add a dash of Bonny Doon Framboise (see p. 26.) Serve chilled. [Vya.com](http://Vya.com).

## A savvy splurge

### 2003 D'Arenberg The Ironstone Pressings, \$65

If you want to give a big-deal bottle with great aging potential, this full-bodied Rhône-style blend from Australia would be money well spent (wines of this caliber from European countries which shall go unnamed can often cost three times as much). The Ironstone Pressings is a blend of Shiraz, Grenache, and Mourvedre from one of Australia's most esteemed vineyards. This bottle would be delicious now, but best to lay it down for a

A bottle of something nifty is a great way to say "Happy Holidays," and any of the ten below, from modest to extravagant, are gifts we'd love to receive. Depending on how much you want to spend, and whether you want to give a bottle that's dry or sweet, there's something here for everyone.

If you can't find the specific pick we've recommended, ask a good merchant about similarly delicious examples. (Retail prices are approximate, and mail order is possible only in states where it's legal. For more information, go to the web sites mentioned, or check with your local retailer.)

few years, to become even lusher and more enjoyable. Uncork this one to savor with braised short ribs, grilled steak, or a lamb roast. Serve at room temperature. [Oldbridgecellars.com](http://Oldbridgecellars.com).

## South Africa's bargain beauty

### Forrester Petit Pinotage, \$10


For the wine drinker in your life who loves trying new things, a bottle of Pinotage from South Africa would be nifty (and thrifty). The Pinotage grape is a hybrid of Pinot Noir (the grape from which red Burgundy is made) and Cinsault (a grape you'll find in red Rhône blends), and it's a mainstay of South Africa's wine production. Though Pinotage may lack the subtlety of Burgundy, it's a heck of a lot cheaper (in fact, the inexpensive ones often taste better), and it's all about pleasure: intensely perfumey, fruity, full-flavored, and fun. If you can't find this particular bottle, ask your local merchant for a Pinotage that's fragrant, fruity, and not too oaky. Pinotage is delicious with roast chicken, soft cheeses, or barbecue glazes with a bit of sweetness. Serve at room temperature.

(Continued on p. 26.)





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## Distinctive single malt

**Aberlour 15-year-old Sherry Finish Single Malt, \$50**

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## Oregon's version of an Italian classic

**Clear Creek Distillery Grappa of Pinot Noir, \$25 (half bottle)**

If you know someone who loves a bracing after-dinner drink, here's a good choice. Grappa, the clear, fiery spirit from Italy, is made from what's left after grapes are pressed (skins, seeds, and grape pulp). Clear Creek Distillery in Oregon makes several American artisanal versions, including one from Pinot Noir grapes. It smells like earth and like wine grapes being crushed at harvest, and it delivers an initial kick with a finish that's clean and surprisingly smooth. Serve chilled. [Clearcreekdistillery.com](http://Clearcreekdistillery.com).

## sweet

### Roasty-sweet Australian Muscat

**Chambers-Rosewood Muscat from Rutherglen, \$15 (half bottle)**

This delicious, modestly priced dessert wine comes from late-harvested Muscat grapes. It smells roasty-sweet and may remind you of caramel or toffee, but the sweetness is balanced and therefore irresistible. Try this Muscat after dinner, either on its own or with a smidge of blue cheese and some walnut bread. Serve slightly chilled. [Oldbridgecellars.com](http://Oldbridgecellars.com).

### Bubbly that's perfect with cake

**Mumm Joyesse, \$35**

A festive bottle of fizz that feels special but won't break the bank, this sweet Champagne makes an especially nice present because it will suit a wide range of tastes—and its floral aromas and flavors of apricots, honey, and peaches make for a deliciously swanky stand-alone dessert. Mumm Joyesse is delicious with salted nuts or mild cheeses, and it's exactly the bubbly you'd want to serve with cake (unlike dry sparkling wine, which usually tastes terrible with sweet things). Serve chilled. [Bdpr.com/champagnemumm](http://Bdpr.com/champagnemumm).

### Luscious raspberry liqueur

**Bonny Doon Framboise, liqueur infusion, \$12 (half bottle)**

A treat for drinkers and cooks alike, Bonny Doon Framboise is easy on the wallet and the palate. A dash poured into a glass of Champagne, dry white wine, or even dry vermouth makes a delicious mixer (see Dry Vermouth from California, p. 24). It's also a delicious dessert on its own, a killer accompaniment to chocolate desserts, and would make a fine flavoring



for custards, dessert sauces, buttercream frostings, and trifle-type desserts. Serve chilled. [Bonnydoonvineyard.com](http://Bonnydoonvineyard.com).

### Ice wine, Canadian nectar

**Inniskillin Oak-Aged Vidal Ice Wine, \$80 (half bottle)**

This one's a splurge, but for the special wine hound in your life, Inniskillin's ice wine is a great find from an unlikely place: Canada. Ice wine happens when selected grapes are left on the vine to weather the cold months long after the other grapes have been picked. Sounds like a lonely fate, but the freezing and thawing the grapes undergo make for complex, powerful flavor. Oak-aged Vidal smells like roasted nuts, peaches, tangerine, and litchi, and its concentrated flavor might remind you of honey and stone fruit. Like all great late-harvest wines, ice wine goes wonderfully well with a big range of cheeses, and it's superb all by itself. Serve chilled. [Inniskillin.com](http://Inniskillin.com).

*Amy Albert is Fine Cooking's senior editor.* ♦



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# Spread the Word

Gift books for food lovers

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

## The joy of entertaining

In *Raising the Bar* (Artisan, \$27.50), author Nick Mautone takes the art of mixology well beyond the usual bartender's guide. Sure, he covers the basics of cocktail making, from choosing the right tools and glassware to stocking your liquor cabinet. But he also discusses the importance of using the freshest and finest ingredients and garnishes, offers tips for matching drinks with food, and reveals the techniques that will make you look like a pro. In addition to some 250 well-crafted drink recipes, there's an entire chapter devoted to snacks and hors d'oeuvres.

Anyone who loves gathering friends around the table would be grateful to receive Peggy Knickerbocker's new book, *Simple Soirées* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$35), which makes entertaining at home seem like the simplest, most natural thing in the world. Filled with gorgeous photos and 100 of the author's favorite recipes, organized into accessible seasonal menus for any festive meal—from dinner for two to feasts for a crowd—this book has everything you need to make wonderful meals for friends.

*Cheese* (Clarkson Potter, \$32.50), by Max McCalman and David Gibbons, is a pictorial guide to the 200 very best cheeses in the world, from Swiss Aarauer Bierdeckel to Spanish Zamorano. The entry for each cheese includes a large color portrait; practical buying, storing, and serving advice; and helpful wine-pairing tips—including a “match made in heaven” for every cheese.



## New classics

First published in 1950, *The Silver Spoon* (Phaidon, \$39.95) is considered a kitchen essential in Italy. And given the popularity of Italian cuisine in this country, it seems safe to say that American cooks will embrace the first-ever English translation of this hefty tome. With 2,000 recipes (tested and rewritten for American sensibilities) and 200 color photos, it's hard to imagine a more comprehensive resource of Italian classics.

*The Cook's Book: Techniques and Tips from the World's Master Chefs* (DK Publishing, \$50), edited by Jill Norman. This may well be the technical reference book we've all been waiting for. Chock full of 1,800 color photos and 650 recipes, it illustrates more than 350 techniques, from essential basics to far-out flourishes. Whether you're looking to thicken a sauce, fold an omelet, hand-shape sushi, skin an eel, or make potato foam, this book can show you how.

These handsome books go from coffee table to kitchen with ease

## A feast for the senses

*Mangoes & Curry Leaves* (Artisan, \$45), the fifth glorious book by the talented husband-and-wife team Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid, brings to life their delicious journey through India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The evocative photos, touching stories, and mouthwatering recipes will whet your appetite—for food and for life.

*Kimberly Y. Masibay is an associate editor for Fine Cooking.* ♦



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# Toasty, Crunchy Homemade Granola

BY ROBIN ASBELL

**Y**ou've probably never bought a box of Cheerios, wrapped it, and given it as a gift. Store-bought cereal just isn't gift material, if you want to keep your friends. Homemade granola, on the other hand, is right up there with cookies and coffee cakes on the gift-ability scale. A simple jar filled with golden, nutty granola is attractive, delicious, and a welcome change from the usual sweet treats that get passed around this time of year.

My granola recipes on p. 34 all follow the same straightforward method, but they each have a different texture. A crunch lover might prefer the Maple Walnut Granola with Dates, where big clusters of tasty oats and nuts can be eaten easily out of hand. This style of granola stays crisp in milk, too. For a looser texture that's easier to sprinkle over yogurt or ice cream, try the Crispy Sweet Pecan Granola. The Honey Almond Granola crosses both worlds—it's a little nuggety, a little loose. All three granolas will be somewhat soft right out of the oven, but they'll become firmer as they cool on the rack. Don't be tempted to bake them until fully crisp, or they'll taste burnt and their texture will be too hard.

I like to package my gift granolas in jars and then adorn them with ribbon or perhaps a fabric scrap. If you're inspired, cover an empty cereal box with decorative paper and slip a zip-top bag of granola inside. You can even put a prize in the bag, although the granola is prize enough.

*(Continued on p. 34)*

Fill a jar with one of these golden, nutty mixes for a different holiday gift







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Boos



### Maple Walnut Granola with Dates

*Yields 11 to 12 cups.*

Stored in an airtight container, this granola keeps well for a week (after that, it loses some crunch and the dates begin to harden).

#### Vegetable oil spray

- 4 cups old-fashioned (not quick-cooking) rolled oats**
- 8 ounces (2 cups) walnut pieces**
- ½ cup whole-wheat flour**
- ½ cup nonfat dry milk powder**
- ½ teaspoon table salt**
- 1½ cups pure maple syrup (I like Grade B)**
- ¼ cup canola oil**
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract**
- 8 to 9 ounces (2 cups) pitted dates, halved or quartered, depending on size**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F. Spray two rimmed baking sheets with vegetable oil spray. In a large bowl, mix the oats, walnuts, whole-wheat flour, dry milk powder, and salt. In a medium bowl, combine the maple syrup, oil, and vanilla; stir well. Add the maple syrup mixture to the oats and mix to combine.

Divide the mixture between the two oiled baking sheets, distributing it in 1- to 2-inch clumps. Bake for 20 minutes and then flip the clusters with a metal spatula and switch the positions of the pans in the oven. Bake for 20 minutes, flip the granola again, and bake until the granola has a very fragrant, toasty aroma and the nuts look well toasted, about another 15 minutes. Let cool completely in the pans. Break up any large clumps. When completely cool and dry, mix in the dates.

### Honey Almond Granola

*Yields 9 to 10 cups.*

This honey-sweetened gem bakes up a little less crunchy than a sugar-sweetened granola. For added crispness, turn off the oven, leave the door ajar, and let the granola cool there. Stored in an airtight container, it will keep for at least three weeks.

#### Vegetable oil spray

- 4 cups old-fashioned (not quick-cooking) rolled oats**
- 1 cup oat bran**
- 2 cups whole almonds, coarsely chopped**
- ¾ cup vegetable oil**
- ¾ cup honey**
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract**
- ½ teaspoon pure almond extract**
- 1 cup nonfat dry milk powder**
- ½ teaspoon table salt**
- 1 cup raisins (optional)**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Spray two rimmed baking sheets with vegetable oil spray. In a large bowl, mix the oats, oat bran, and almonds. In a smaller bowl, whisk the oil, honey, vanilla, almond extract, dry milk powder, and salt. Pour the mixture (it will be gloppy) over the oats and stir, with your hands or a spoon, until well combined.

Divide the mixture between the two oiled baking sheets and spread in an even layer. Bake for 20 minutes, stir, and switch the positions of the pans. Bake until the oats are golden brown and the nuts look well toasted, another 10 to 20 minutes; don't overcook. Let cool completely in the pans. The oats may feel soft but will crisp as they cool. When completely cool, stir in the raisins, if using.

### Crispy Sweet Pecan Granola

*Yields 4 to 5 cups.*

This loose-textured granola will stay fresh for at least three weeks if stored in an airtight container.

#### Vegetable oil spray

- 3 cups old-fashioned (not quick-cooking) rolled oats**
- 1 cup pecan halves, roughly chopped**
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon**
- ¼ teaspoon table salt**
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar**
- 2 tablespoons canola oil**
- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 300°F. Spray two rimmed baking sheets with vegetable oil spray. In a large bowl, mix the oats, pecans, cinnamon, and salt. In a small saucepan, combine the brown sugar and ¼ cup water. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring until the sugar is melted. Stir in the oil and vanilla. Remove from the heat and pour over the oat mixture. Stir with a spoon until well mixed.

Divide the mixture evenly between the oiled baking sheets and spread in an even layer. Bake for 15 minutes, stir, and switch the positions of the pans, and then bake until the oats are golden brown and the nuts look well toasted, another 10 to 15 minutes. The oats may feel soft but will crisp as they cool. Let cool completely in the pans.

*Robin Asbell is a freelance food writer and private chef in Minneapolis, where baking granola is a fragrant way to warm up the kitchen. ♦*





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# From Oven to Table, Three Unexpected Gift Ideas



I've long admired the look and feel of soapstone countertops, sinks, fireplaces, and woodstoves, so I jumped at the chance to try this 3-liter soapstone casserole. I used it in the oven and on the stovetop for soups, stews, sautés, and stir-fries. The remarkable thing about the pot—apart from its beauty—is the gentle and even heat it radiates. The stone is dense and absorbs heat slowly (as a result, it's also very heavy), but once heated, it stays warm for a long time. I love it for making risotto and other grain or bean dishes that lose appeal if they cool down. Even second helpings of risotto were still warm. Properly cared for, a soapstone pot will be something you pass down to your children or grandchildren. A 3-liter pot is about \$100. To find a retailer near you or order online, visit [BrazilOnMyMind.com](http://BrazilOnMyMind.com).

—Molly Stevens, contributing editor



## You'll flip for this waffle maker

If you really want to wow your breakfast companions, a flip waffle maker is the way to go. It's an attention grabber, and more importantly, it turns out delicious deep-pocketed Belgian-style waffles.

Flip waffle makers work simply: Heat the iron, pour in the batter, shut the lid, and rotate the griddle 180 degrees. When the waffle is done (an alarm will sound), flip the griddle back to its original position and open the lid.

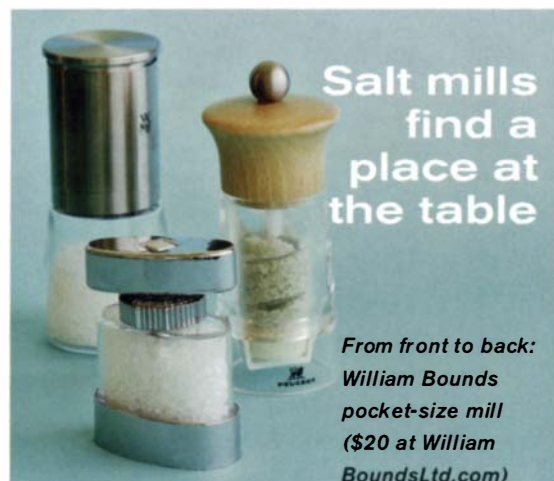
So what does "the flip" accomplish? Manufacturers say it ensures even browning. And with the three models we tested, the waffles did brown evenly.

But we noticed another, more striking advantage: The waffles had an airy, almost lacy middle that was much more appealing than the breadly texture of most Belgian waffles.

A flip waffle maker may not store as compactly as a classic waffle maker, but, if you have one, you just might want to keep it on display.

—Maryellen Driscoll, editor at large

**The Waring Pro Belgian Waffle Maker (\$79.95 at [SurLaTable.com](http://SurLaTable.com)) turns out light, crisp waffles. Other manufacturers are making this style waffle maker, too.**



**From front to back: William Bounds pocket-size mill (\$20 at [William Bounds Ltd.com](http://WilliamBoundsLtd.com))**

Pinching coarse salt from a bowl makes sense when you're working at the stove, but for table use, a salt mill is the way to go. Salt mills are designed to grind coarse specialty salts with flavor nuances that bloom when sprinkled on finished foods. Any mill worth its salt should have a noncorrosive grinding mechanism; a transparent body so you don't confuse the salt with pepper; and an adjustable grind. The three shown above fit the bill. —M. D. ♦

**has a trap door over the grinding mechanism so salt doesn't escape until you want it to. Peugeot's Vendome Guerande Salt Mill (\$35.80 at [Total HomeStore.com](http://TotalHomeStore.com)) is made expressly for wet sea salt. WMF's stylish mill (\$29.95 at [TableTools.com](http://TableTools.com)) has a heavy-duty glass body.**



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### Ghirardelli Dark Chocolate Truffles

1/3 cup heavy whipping cream

6 Tbsp unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

2 cups Ghirardelli 60% Cocoa Bittersweet Chocolate Chips or two 4 oz Ghirardelli 60% Cocoa Bittersweet Chocolate Baking bars

Coating: 1/3 cup Ghirardelli Unsweetened Cocoa or 3/4 cup chopped almonds or pecans

Bring the cream to a simmer in a small saucepan. Add butter and stir until melted. Add Ghirardelli chocolate. Stir until completely melted and smooth. Dip finger into melted chocolate to test the deeper, darker taste of our new, higher cocoa content chocolate. Remove from heat and pour the chocolate mixture into a shallow bowl. Cool, cover and hide in refrigerator until firm, at least two hours.

Roll mixture into 1" balls and then roll each ball in Ghirardelli Unsweetened Cocoa, chopped almonds or pecans. Serve.



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## menu

for six



Wild Rice &  
Mushroom Soup  
with Almonds



Mustard, Sage  
& Maple-Glazed  
Pork Roast with  
Garlic-Roasted  
Potatoes



Sweet-Sour  
Red Cabbage



Apple Charlottes

For a timetable, see p. 42.

# Home for the Holidays

For a dinner  
that's elegant  
but comforting,  
a chef puts a  
new spin on old  
family favorites

BY RIS LACOSTE

One of the best things about being a chef is helping to create memorable meals and happy times around the tables in my restaurant. I love making that happen at home, too—especially during the holidays, when *I* finally get a chance to sit down with my guests. Here's my strategy. For the most warming of feasts, I dip into my stash of family recipes and put some new touches on traditional flavors. And to fit entertaining into my busy work schedule, I adopt the do-ahead mindset of the restaurant kitchen, preparing as many components as I can in advance. The results are a holiday menu that's realistic for you, yet impressive to your guests. As you'll see from the timetable on p. 42, with a little planning, it's totally manageable.

**Dinner starts with an irresistibly velvety wild rice soup.** Inspired by a friend from Minnesota, the soup gets nutty flavors both from the rice and from a toasted almond garnish, richness from bacon, and body from a roux (a flour and butter mixture). There's some heavy cream at the finish (a little indulgent, but why not?—it's holiday time).

(Continued on p. 40)





Serve the pork, cabbage, and potatoes family-style on a big platter for a casual presentation.



The main course, a bone-in roast pork loin, is a classic in my French Canadian family. I've added a glaze of mustard and sage (two close friends of pork). Into a traditional side dish of roasted potatoes, I've tossed garlic cloves. I've also timed the pork loin so that the potatoes roast at the same time, freeing you up for other kitchen tasks. Sweet-Sour Red Cabbage, the vegetable side dish, can be made hours ahead, and it stands up well to sitting and reheating. Its sweet-tangy kick brings both harmony and contrast to the glazed pork and roasted potatoes.

**Serve the main course family-style.** Carve the pork loin and arrange it with the potato wedges atop the cabbage—the platter will be the focal point of the table when you set it down to a chorus of “oohs” and “aahs.” Serving family-style also saves you the potentially chaotic kitchen hustle of arranging six individual plates at the last moment.

Individually molded apple charlottes are vanilla-scented and buttery; they're a perfect finale. The charlottes can be baked ahead of time and chilled. They'll just need a gentle reheating (while you're clearing the dinner dishes and making coffee), and they're a cinch to unmold and serve when warm. Now, all that's left is for you is to sit back down—and revel in having pulled off such a fabulous dinner party.



### Wild Rice & Mushroom Soup with Almonds

*Yields 8½ to 9 cups soup; serves six generously.*

If you can't find a ham hock, just leave it out—the soup will still taste terrific.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 6 ounces applewood-smoked bacon (about 7 slices), thinly sliced crosswise**
- 1 pound button mushrooms, stems trimmed; wiped clean and quartered (to yield about 5 cups)**
- 1 large yellow onion (12 ounces), cut into medium dice (to yield 2 cups)**
- 3 medium ribs celery (5 ounces total), cut into medium dice (to yield 1 cup)**
- 1 large carrot (5 ounces), cut into medium dice (to yield 1 cup)**
- ½ cup wild rice**
- 6 cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth; more if needed**
- 1 smoked ham hock (optional)**
- 15 sprigs fresh thyme (¼ ounce), 10 sprigs fresh flat-leaf parsley (½ ounce), 6 sprigs fresh sage (½ ounce), and 1 bay leaf, tied together with kitchen twine**
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- ½ cup unbleached all-purpose flour**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1½ cups heavy cream**

FOR THE GARNISH:

- 2 ounces (½ cup) slivered almonds, toasted**
- ¼ cup thinly sliced chives**

Heat the oil in a heavy-based soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until the fat is rendered and the bacon is crisp, about 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms, stir well to coat in the bacon fat, and then spread out in an even layer. Brown the mushrooms on one side without disturbing them, 4 to 6 minutes. Stir in the

onion, celery, and carrot; let cook until the onions are soft, about 5 minutes. Add the rice, stirring to coat. Stir in the chicken broth, ham hock (if using), and herb bundle. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook, uncovered, until the rice is tender but still toothsome, 30 to 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, melt the butter in a small heavy-based saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the flour and whisk constantly until the mixture, called a roux, darkens to a caramel color, 2 to 3 minutes. Set aside.

Once the rice is cooked, discard the herbs. If you've used a ham hock, fish it out, and when it's cool enough to handle, take the meat off and return the shredded meat to the soup. Discard the bone. Return the soup to a boil and thoroughly whisk in the roux a little at a time. This amount of roux should thicken the soup perfectly. You can adjust the amount to your taste if it's too thick or thin, but keep in mind that the cream you'll add later will thin the soup. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

When ready to serve, heat the soup first and then add the cream. (If you like a lighter soup, you may not want to add all the cream.) Taste for seasoning and adjust if needed, and thin with broth, if you like. Garnish each serving with the toasted almonds and sliced chives.

### WORKING AHEAD

**You can prepare the soup up to three days ahead (to just before you add the cream), or it can be frozen for up to a month. When ready to serve, heat the soup and add the heavy cream and garnishes.**





## Mustard, Sage & Maple-Glazed Pork Roast with Garlic-Roasted Potatoes

*Serves six.*

When ordering the pork, be sure to have the back-bone (called the chine bone) removed, so you'll be able to slice the roast between the rib bones. But since most people love to chew the crusted meat and crackling pork fat off the rib bones, don't have them scraped clean (butchers call this frenching).

### FOR THE PORK:

- 1 six-bone center-cut pork roast (about 5½ pounds), chine bone removed**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- Mustard, Sage & Maple Glaze (recipe at right)**

### FOR THE POTATOES:

- 2 pounds medium red or yellow potatoes, rinsed (you can use a combination, but they may cook at slightly different rates)**
- 1 head garlic, cloves peeled**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Position racks in the center and bottom of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. Let the roast sit at room temperature while the oven heats. Season the meat generously with salt and pepper. Put the pork in a small roasting pan, bone side down, and roast on the center oven rack to an internal temperature of 115°F, 50 to 60 minutes. Remove the roast from the oven and let it rest for 20 minutes. (This rest will give the juiciest results.)

Meanwhile, shortly before the pork hits 115°F, cut the potatoes lengthwise into wedges about 1½ to 1¾ inches wide at their thickest part. In a medium bowl, toss the potatoes with the garlic cloves, olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper. Arrange in a roasting pan or rimmed baking sheet, one cut side down, evenly spaced. Sprinkle with the pieces of butter. When you take the roast out of the oven, put the potatoes on the bottom rack and reduce the oven temperature to 350°F.

After 20 minutes of resting, cover the roast evenly with the mustard glaze and return it to the center oven rack. At this time, turn the potatoes with a metal spatula onto their other cut side. Roast the pork until the internal temperature is 140°F. Roast the potatoes until they're golden and crisp on the outside and fork-tender inside. Both should take about 30 minutes (check the potatoes at 20 minutes and, if necessary for even browning, flip them back to their other cut side.) Transfer the roast to a carving board and tent with foil.

Let the pork rest for at least 20 minutes before carving. Set the potatoes aside in a warm place, uncovered (so they stay crisp and don't steam), until ready to serve. To serve, slice the roast between the bones into individual chops. Toss the potatoes with the chopped parsley. Arrange the meat and potatoes on a platter with the cabbage.

## WORKING AHEAD

The glaze at right can be made up to two days ahead and refrigerated.



## Mustard, Sage & Maple Glaze

*Yields about 1½ cups.*

- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 medium-small yellow onion (6 ounces), cut into medium dice (to yield 1 cup)**
- 4 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**
- ⅓ cup coarsely chopped fresh sage (about 1½ bunches)**
- ½ cup Dijon mustard**
- ½ cup pure maple syrup**
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce**
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper**

Heat the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion softens, about 5 minutes. Set aside until cooled to room temperature. Purée the onion and garlic with all of the remaining ingredients in a blender or food processor until somewhat smooth. Keep covered in the refrigerator until ready to use on the pork roast. You could also use this glaze on pork tenderloin or even roast chicken; put it on chicken halfway through cooking.

## Timetable

Up to three days ahead:

Order the pork roast.

Prepare the soup (leave out the cream); refrigerate or freeze.

Up to two days ahead:

Make the pork glaze.

Prepare the charlotte filling; refrigerate.

Up to one day ahead:

Slice the cabbage and bacon; wrap and refrigerate.

Assemble and bake the charlottes; cover and refrigerate.

Prepare the soup garnishes.

Two hours before guests arrive:

Put the roast in the oven.

Make the cabbage; cover and set aside.

Prepare the potatoes for roasting.

One hour before guests arrive:

Put the potatoes in the oven.

Just before dinner

Reheat and finish the soup.

Pull the roast out and let it rest; pull the potatoes out when they're ready.

Gently reheat the cabbage.

Take the charlottes out of the refrigerator.

As you're clearing the main-course dishes:

Warm the charlottes at 350°F for about 12 minutes; unmold when warm.

### Sweet-Sour Red Cabbage

*Yields 5 cups; serves six.*

I love this as a side dish because its sweet flavors go so well with pork, and because the sour-tangy element highlights the flavors in the glaze.

**1 tablespoon olive oil**  
**6 ounces applewood-smoked bacon** (about 7 slices), cut into julienne (to yield 1½ cups)  
**1 large yellow onion** (12 ounces), thinly sliced (to yield 2 cups)  
**1 small head red cabbage** (about 2 pounds), cored, cut into eighths, and thinly sliced crosswise (to yield about 8 cups)  
**1 cup dark brown sugar**  
**¼ cup red-wine vinegar**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a 5- or 6-quart Dutch oven, heat the oil over high heat, add the bacon, and cook, stirring occasionally, until its fat is rendered and the bacon is crisp, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until soft and lightly colored, about 3 minutes. Add the cabbage and cook, stirring regularly, until just wilted, about 5 minutes. Add the brown sugar and vinegar, stir well, and let cook until the



cabbage is wilted but still has a bit of crunch left to it, about 5 minutes. Season with ¾ teaspoon salt and several grinds of pepper. Adjust the acidity or sweetness with a touch more vinegar or sugar if you like, and add more salt and pepper if needed.

### WORKING AHEAD

The cabbage will hold well, in the covered pot, for several hours.

This rich and savory menu calls for deeply flavored wines that will match the intensity of the dishes. If you want to serve wine with the wild rice soup, a supple California Pinot Noir is a good choice. Look for the 2003 Echelon Pinot Noir from the Central Coast (\$14) or the 2004 Greg Norman Pinot Noir from Santa Barbara County (\$18).

A rich, spicy Shiraz or Rhône blend would be perfect with the pork roast. The 2003 Wolf Blass Shiraz "President's Selection," South Australia (\$17) and the 2002 Coriole, McLaren Vale (\$27) are two of the best I've recently tasted. If you feel like spending a little more, look for a Rhône-style blend like the 2002 Joseph Phelps "Le Mistral" (\$30), from the Napa Valley, or the

2001 Château de la Gardine Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$35) from France.

And finally, a sweet, late-harvest Sémillon would be delicious with the apple charlottes. The 2001 Peter Lehmann Botrytis Sémillon from South Australia is a great value at \$17 per half-bottle.

—Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier and contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*



## Individual Apple Charlottes

*Serves eight.*

This recipe yields two more servings than the rest of the menu recipes do, but having a few extra of these delicious charlottes could be handy. You may have seen charlotte recipes that call for sponge-cake ladyfingers and for the charlotte to be served cold, but classically, an apple charlotte calls for bread and is served warm. This recipe was created by my pastry chef, Zoe Behrens.

### FOR THE FILLING:

**3 pounds Braeburn or Golden Delicious apples (6 or 7 apples)**  
**1 lemon, rinsed**  
**1 vanilla bean**  
**1/3 cup raisins**  
**1/3 cup golden raisins**  
**2 1/2 ounces (5 tablespoons) unsalted butter**  
**1/4 cup granulated sugar**  
**1 tablespoon Calvados (or other apple brandy)**

### FOR THE CRUST:

**1 loaf sliced white bread (I use Pepperidge Farm Classic White; you may want to buy an extra loaf just in case)**  
**1/2 pound (1 cup) unsalted butter**  
**3/4 cup granulated sugar**

**Crème fraîche or vanilla ice cream for serving**

**Make the filling:** Peel, core, and dice the apples into 1/4-inch pieces (you'll have about 6 1/2 cups). Using a vegetable peeler, peel the zest off half the lemon in long strips, taking care to avoid the bitter white pith (if necessary, remove any pith from the zest strips by scraping it off with a knife). Slice the vanilla bean in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds with the back of a paring knife. In a large bowl, toss the apples, lemon zest, vanilla bean seeds and spent pod, raisins, and golden raisins.

In a 12-inch skillet or 5-quart Dutch oven, melt the butter over medium-high heat and then add the sugar. When the sugar is fully moistened, add the apple mixture and cook, stirring almost constantly, until the apples start to release liquid and look soft on the outside (they'll still be a little crunchy inside), about 7 minutes (you want to just start the cooking process at this point while still leaving the apples crunchy). Set the

## Assembling the apple charlottes



*Trace around the ramekin bottom with a paring knife to cut a round of bread to line each ramekin.*

*Cut strips of bread to line the sides. The bread needn't come all the way up the sides of the ramekin, but it should be close to the rim.*

*Add the apple mixture to the bread-lined ramekins, packing it firmly.*

apple mixture aside to cool slightly and then add the Calvados.

**Prepare the crust:** Position a rack in the middle of the oven; heat the oven to 475°F. Trim the bread crusts. Cut eight rounds to fit the bottoms of eight 8-ounce ramekins. Cut enough rectangles to line the sides. (The bread should come to within at least 3/4 inch of the ramekin's rim, if not the top.) Melt the butter in a medium skillet and put the sugar in a shallow dish. Brush the insides of the ramekins with butter. Generously dip both sides of each piece of bread in butter followed by sugar on one side. Lay one round in each ramekin, sugared side down. Nestle the rectangles, sugared side facing outward toward the ramekin, so they line the sides of each one.

**Assemble and bake:** Pick the lemon zest and vanilla bean halves out of the apple filling and fill each ramekin, pressing on the filling to get rid of air pockets. Be generous; the filling will cook down. Set the ramekins on a rimmed baking sheet (leaving a few inches between each) and cover snugly with one sheet of foil. Bake for 40 minutes. To see if the charlottes are done, run a paring knife around the side, knock on the ramekin bottom, and invert a ramekin onto a plate to check the bottom; it should be nicely caramelized, and will have caramelized more than the sides. (If they're not done yet, return



them to the oven for a few more minutes). Unmold and serve with a spoonful of crème fraîche or a scoop of vanilla ice cream on the side.

### WORKING AHEAD

**These can be completely prepared a day ahead, covered (still in the molds) with plastic, and refrigerated. To reheat, let them sit at room temperature while you heat the oven to 350°F. Bake until hot, about 12 minutes, and unmold.**

**A buttery caramelized bread coating has a surprise inside—a vanilla-scented apple filling.**

*Ris Lacoste is the executive chef at 1789 Restaurant in Washington, DC. ♦*



# Ginger Gives Delicious Warmth to Cookies

Fresh, dried, or crystallized, ginger adds fragrant warmth to more than just gingerbread

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

**W**ith its wonderfully aromatic flavor, ginger is a winning ingredient for wintertime baking, especially in cookies. It's all the same spice, but in its three different guises, ginger is both a versatile team player and a first-string star when it comes to cookies. While I'm a big fan of traditional gingerbread, I also love trying different ginger cookies that reach beyond the expected, using fresh, dried, or crystallized ginger alone or in combination, along with other "helper" ingredients to bring out its best.

**Fresh ginger provides a warm, mellow flavor with a citrusy lift** in buttery cookies like the Ginger & Lemon Cookies. A hit of lemon zest will enhance this trait in a truly delicious way.

**Dried ginger has an earthy flavor that's a natural with other baking spices like cinnamon or nutmeg**, and it gives the Gingerbread Biscotti and the Ginger Snaps the familiar gingerbreadly and ginger-snappy flavor that you'll recognize as classic ginger. For the Ginger Snaps, I like to highlight this with a few grinds of cracked black pepper, whose heat turns ground ginger even spunkier.

**Crystallized ginger lends sophistication, sparkle, complexity, and texture.** I love using it in tandem with dried ginger in the Double Ginger Crackles for a flavor that's smooth and spicy, with nubbins that offer a satisfying chewiness. Crystallized ginger adds sparkle to the Ginger & Lemon cookies, too.

## Shopping for and storing ginger



### Fresh

Look for unblemished, firm roots and avoid the older, wrinkly ones. Fresh ginger keeps in the fridge for two weeks or so. To use, gently scrape away the thin layer of skin from a portion of the root with a spoon. For finely grated fresh ginger, I like to use a rasp-style grater.



### Dried or ground

Like all dried spices, ground ginger's intensity diminishes over time, so buy in small quantities and use it up within six months. If you're not sure if your ground ginger is still fresh, smell it: It should have an assertive, spicy, gingery aroma.



### Crystallized

This soft, candied form of ginger is sold in many sizes, all of which are found in natural-foods stores, gourmet stores, Asian markets, and increasingly, in super-markets' spice sections. Whether you buy 1/4-inch-thick quarter-size rounds (my preference) or chopped or diced crystallized ginger, be sure it's moist, pliable, and visibly coated with sugar granules. Kept in an airtight container, it will stay moist and fragrant for months.





For a sophisticated Santa

## Eat them or freeze them

Ginger flavor intensifies with time, making these cookies excellent candidates for long keeping. When stored in an airtight container, the cookies remain impressively delicious for up to five days from baking. Well wrapped, all these cookies will keep for several weeks in the freezer.

### Double Ginger Crackles

*Yields about four dozen cookies.*

The double hit of ginger here comes from both ground ginger and crystallized ginger.

**10 ounces (2¼ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**2¾ teaspoons ground ginger**  
**1 teaspoon baking soda**  
**¼ teaspoon table salt**  
**6 ounces (¾ cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature**  
**1⅓ cups granulated sugar**  
**1 large egg, at room temperature**  
**¼ cup molasses**  
**3 tablespoons finely chopped crystallized ginger**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line two large cookie sheets with parchment or nonstick baking liners.

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, ground ginger, baking soda, and salt. In a large bowl, beat the butter and 1 cup of the sugar with an electric mixer (a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, or a hand-held) on medium-high speed until well blended. Add the egg, molasses, and crystallized ginger; beat well. Add the dry ingredients and mix on low speed until well blended.

Pour the remaining ⅓ cup sugar into a shallow bowl. Using a 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, a small ice cream scoop, or two tablespoons, shape the dough into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in the sugar to coat. Set the balls 1½ to 2 inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets.

Bake, rotating the sheets halfway through baking, until the cookies are puffed and the bottoms are lightly browned, 12 to 14 minutes. If you touch a cookie, it should feel dry on the surface but soft inside. The surface cracks will look a bit wet. Let the cookies sit on the cookie sheet for 5 minutes and then transfer them to a rack to cool completely. When cool, store in airtight containers.



## Gingerbread Biscotti

*Yields about 24 biscotti.*

Biscotti are very forgiving, and you can bake these to your taste: chewy, crunchy, or somewhere in between.

**10 ounces (2¼ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**1¼ cups packed dark brown sugar**  
**2 teaspoons ground ginger**  
**1¼ teaspoons baking powder**  
**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**  
**¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**  
**¼ teaspoon baking soda**  
**4 ounces (1 cup) pecans, coarsely chopped**  
**4 ounces (½ cup) lightly packed dried apricots, coarsely chopped**  
**¼ cup molasses**  
**2 large eggs**  
**2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest**  
(from about 1 medium navel orange)

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a large cookie sheet with parchment.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the flour, brown sugar, ginger, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, nutmeg, and baking soda on medium-low speed until well blended. On low speed, briefly mix in the pecans and apricots. In a measuring cup, lightly whisk the molasses, eggs, and orange zest. With the mixer on low, slowly pour in the egg mixture. Continue mixing until the dough is well blended and comes together in large, moist clumps, 1 to 2 minutes.

Dump the dough onto an unfloured work surface. Divide into two equal piles (about 1 pound each). Shape each pile into a log that's 10 inches long and about 1½ inches in diameter, lightly flouring your hands as needed (the dough is a bit sticky).

Position the logs on the lined cookie sheet about 4 inches apart. Bake until the tops are cracked and spring back slightly when gently pressed, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer the sheet to a rack and let cool until the logs are cool enough to handle, about 10 minutes.

Carefully peel the biscotti logs from the parchment and transfer to a cutting board. Using a serrated knife, saw each log into diagonal slices ¾ inch wide. Return the slices to the cookie sheet (no need for fresh parchment) and arrange them cut side down. It's all right if they touch because they won't spread.

Bake until the biscotti are dried to your taste, about 10 minutes (for slightly moist and chewy) to 20 minutes (for super-dry and crunchy). Transfer the cookie sheet to a rack and let the biscotti cool completely. The biscotti will still give slightly when pressed, but will harden as they cool. When cool, store in airtight containers.



Midnight snack



Spice up the tea party



## Ginger Snaps

*Yields about 40 cookies.*

These snaps have a crunchy texture and a good, spicy warmth.

**7½ ounces (1⅔ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**1½ teaspoons ground ginger**  
**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**½ teaspoon baking soda**  
**¼ teaspoon table salt**  
**¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**  
**¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**  
**¼ pound (½ cup) unsalted butter, completely softened at room temperature**  
**¾ cup packed dark brown sugar**  
**1 large egg yolk**  
**3 tablespoons molasses**

In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, salt, nutmeg, and pepper.

In a large bowl, beat the butter and brown sugar with a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the egg

yolk and molasses and mix until well blended, about 1 minute. Add the flour mixture and mix on medium-low speed until the dough is well blended and forms moist pebbles, 30 to 60 seconds.

Dump the dough onto an unfloured work surface; gently knead until it comes together. Shape into an 8-inch-long log about 1½ inches in diameter and wrap in plastic. Refrigerate until firm, about 3 hours.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line two large cookie sheets with parchment or nonstick baking liners.

Unwrap the dough and use a thin, sharp knife to cut the log into ⅜-inch slices. Arrange the slices about 1 inch apart on the sheets. Bake one sheet at a time until the cookies are slightly darker brown on the bottoms and around the edges, 10 to 12 minutes. Set the sheet on a rack to cool for 15 minutes. Transfer the cookies to a rack and let cool completely. When cool, store in airtight containers.



A snappy gift



## Ginger & Lemon Cookies

*Yields about 30 cookies.*

These are excellent with tea. A rasp-style grater comes in handy for grating both the ginger and the lemon zest.

**½ pound (1 cup) unsalted butter, at room temperature**  
**¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**3 tablespoons finely grated fresh ginger**  
**½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest**  
**¼ teaspoon table salt**  
**2 large egg yolks**  
**½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**11¼ ounces (2½ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**2 tablespoons finely chopped crystallized ginger**  
**1 lightly beaten egg white**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line three large cookie sheets with parchment or nonstick baking liners.

In a large bowl, combine the butter, ¾ cup of the sugar, the grated ginger, lemon zest, and salt. Using an electric mixer set on medium speed, beat the mixture until well blended and light, 2 to 3 minutes.

Scrape the bowl. Add the egg yolks and vanilla; continue mixing until well blended, 30 to 60 seconds. Add the flour and mix on low speed until the dough is blended and just comes together.

Shape tablespoonfuls of the dough into 1-inch balls (I use a small ice cream scoop) and set the balls 1½ inches apart on the prepared cookie sheets. In a small, shallow dish, mix the crystallized ginger and the remaining 2 tablespoons granulated sugar until blended.

With the palm of your hand, press on one of the dough balls until it's ¼ inch thick and about 2 inches in diameter. Repeat with remaining dough balls. Brush the tops of the cookies with the egg white and sprinkle them with the ginger-sugar mixture. Press gently on the cookies with the bottom of a metal measuring cup to help the topping adhere.

Bake one sheet at a time until the cookies are light brown on the bottoms and around the edges, about 11 minutes on dark cookie sheets, or about 13 minutes on silver-toned sheets. Set the sheet on a rack to cool for 5 minutes and then transfer the cookies to the rack to cool completely. When cool, store in airtight containers.

## Shaping tip

Although I shape these Ginger & Lemon Cookies by hand, they can also be done with a cookie press or pastry bag so they look like traditional spritz cookies. Brush the tops with the egg white and sprinkle with just the sugar, eliminating the crystallized ginger.

Abigail Johnson Dodge is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. Her latest cookbook is *The Weekend Baker*. ♦

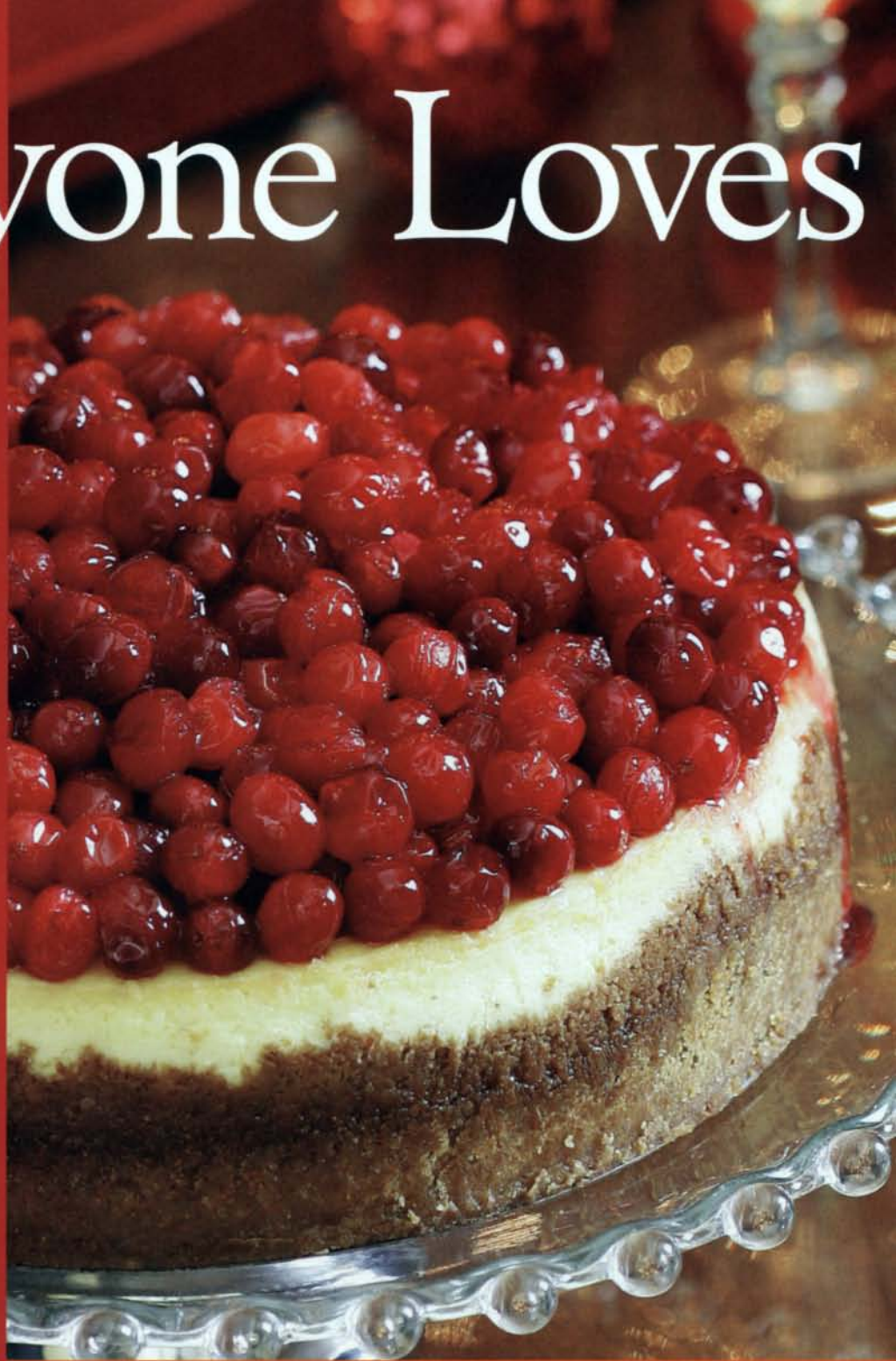


# Everyone Loves

BY NICOLE REES

**T**rust me, it's never a mistake to serve cheesecake for dessert, and this one is a real beauty. Let me count the ways: It's creamy and dense in the New York style. It's crowned with a sweet, jewel-like cranberry sauce. It's virtually foolproof. And, it can be made ahead. (Well, actually, it must be made ahead, because the cheesecake needs to chill for a good 8 hours before you eat it.)

Wonderful as they are, cheesecakes have a reputation for being uncooperative because they're prone to forming cracks on top. Now, that isn't the worst thing in the world—a cracked cheesecake tastes every bit as delicious as a perfectly smooth one—but it is disappointing, particularly if you're planning to serve the cake to guests. So I built several safeguards against cracking into this recipe, the last of which is the cranberry topping. If, for some reason, the unthinkable happens and your cheesecake cracks, just spoon on the beautiful cranberries and forget about it. No one will ever know.



## Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce

*Yields about 3½ cups.*

1¼ cups granulated sugar  
½ cup honey  
1 12-ounce package fresh cranberries,  
rinsed, dried, and picked over  
2 tablespoons Cointreau

In a medium saucepan, bring the sugar, honey, and ¾ cup water to a boil over high heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Reduce the heat to

medium and stir in the cranberries. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the foam has turned fuchsia and many of the berries have popped, about 5 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and stir in the Cointreau. Pour into a heatproof bowl and refrigerate until cold, about 3 hours, but preferably overnight. The sauce can be made two days in advance and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator.



# Cheesecake

...and this one is especially creamy, spectacularly delicious, and topped with a cranberry-Cointreau sauce

## New York Style Cheesecake with Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce

*Yields one 9-inch cheesecake; serves twelve to sixteen.*

### FOR THE GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST:

**5¾ ounces finely ground graham cracker crumbs (about 10 cracker rectangles ground to yield 1½ packed cups)**

**¼ cup granulated sugar**

**2½ ounces (5 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted; plus 1 teaspoon melted butter for the pan**

### FOR THE CHEESECAKE:

**4 8-ounce packages cream cheese, at room temperature**

**1½ cups granulated sugar**

**1 tablespoon all-purpose flour**

**4 large eggs, at room temperature**

**¾ cup sour cream, at room temperature**

**2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**

**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

**Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce (see the recipe at left)**

### SET OUT THE INGREDIENTS

At least 4 hours before you begin, set the cream cheese, eggs, and sour cream on your kitchen counter because it's essential that the ingredients be at room temperature before you mix the batter.

### MAKE THE CRUST

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. In a medium bowl, combine the graham cracker crumbs and sugar. Stir in the 5 tablespoons melted butter until the crumbs are evenly moistened. Dump the crumbs into a 9-inch springform pan that's about 2½ inches deep and press them firmly into the bottom and about halfway up the sides. Bake until the crust is fragrant and warm to the touch, 5 to 7 minutes; it's fine if the crust starts to look golden, but it shouldn't brown too much. Let the pan cool on a rack while you prepare the cheesecake batter.

### MAKE THE CHEESECAKE BATTER

With a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese with the

sugar at medium-low speed until the mixture is smooth and somewhat fluffy, about 2 minutes. Scrape the bowl. On low speed, beat in the flour. One at a time, beat in the eggs on low speed, mixing the batter for only 15 to 20 seconds after each egg is added, just until it's incorporated, and scraping the bowl each time. Don't overbeat. Add the sour cream, lemon juice, and vanilla. Beat at low speed until well combined, about 30 seconds. The batter should be smooth and have the consistency of a thick milkshake.

### BAKE THE CAKE IN A WATER BATH

Wrap the outside of the pan tightly with two sheets of extra-wide (18-inch) heavy-duty aluminum foil to make the pan waterproof.



Brush the inside rim of the pan with a light coating of the remaining 1 teaspoon melted butter, taking care not to disturb the crust.

Pour the batter into the prepared crust; it should cover the crust completely and come to within about ½ inch of the pan's rim. Put the springform pan in a roasting pan and carefully pour hot water into the roasting pan until the water reaches halfway up the sides of the springform pan. Bake at 350°F, without opening the oven door for the first hour, until the top of the cake is golden brown and doesn't wobble in the middle when the

pan is nudged (a little jiggle is fine), about 1 hour 10 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes. (The cheesecake will be gooey in the middle; don't worry, it will set as it cools.)

### LET THE CAKE COOL

Remove the cheesecake pan from the water bath, remove the foil wrapping (you may need an extra set of hands for this), and set the pan on a wire rack. Run a thin-bladed knife around the inside rim of the pan to free the cheesecake from the sides of the pan. Let the cake cool on the rack until barely warm.

Refrigerate uncovered for at least 8 hours or overnight. The cheesecake will firm up during chilling.

### SERVE THE CHEESECAKE

Run a thin-bladed knife around the inside rim of the pan again—taking care not to disturb the crust—to loosen the chilled cheesecake. Unclasp and remove the side of the springform pan, and then use a wide spatula to transfer the cake to a serving plate.

Right before serving, use a slotted spoon to scoop the cranberries out of the syrup and let them drain briefly before spooning them onto the top of the cake. (Save the leftover syrup for pouring onto vanilla ice cream or mixing with seltzer to make cranberry spritzers.)

Before slicing, rinse a long, thin-bladed knife under hot water. Wipe the blade between slices and rinse it under hot water again as needed.

Wrapped and refrigerated, the topped cheesecake will keep for a week.

*Nicole Rees, co-author of Understanding Baking and The Baker's Manual, lives and bakes in Portland, Oregon. ♦*

# Five Hors d'Oeuvres

Create a festive party for sixteen with a variety of small bites

**Crudités  
with Creamy  
Roquefort Dip**

**Silky  
Leek & Celery  
Root Soup**



**Caramelized  
Onion &  
Thyme Tarts**

**A**fter years of catering and entertaining, I've learned one thing for certain: Nobody eats before a cocktail party. "Just a few hors d'oeuvres" (as every host likes to put it) ends up being dinner for most party guests. So rather than fight it, I've learned to plan a cocktail party menu as if it were a bite-size dinner. Like any other meal, you need a variety of tastes, textures, and ingredients. The hard part is to provide just

that, and still have the time to visit with your guests. But it can be done.

**The objective is to come up with a well-balanced menu that can be mostly prepared in advance.** Unfortunately, many hors d'oeuvres lose a little something if prepared too far ahead of time, and attention to a few last-minute details can be the difference between a good hors d'oeuvre and a truly delicious one. So to me, the key to a successful cocktail

party is to prep almost everything ahead and save the most critical steps for the last minute. Just start the party with an anchor—an item that's totally ready to go when your guests walk in the door. A beautiful basket of crudités with a creamy Roquefort dip, for example, ensures that your guests will have something to nibble on (remember, they haven't eaten yet) while you put the finishing touches on the other hors d'oeuvres.

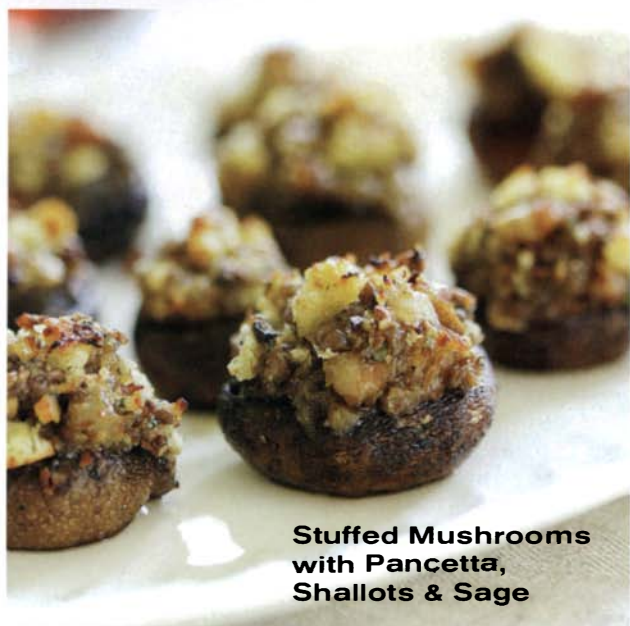
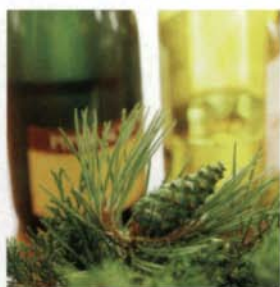


# Add Up to Dinner

BY TASHA DeSERIO



Smoked Salmon  
& Crème Fraîche  
on Belgian  
Endive



Stuffed Mushrooms  
with Pancetta,  
Shallots & Sage

## Strategy for stress-free entertaining

### Up to two days ahead:

- Make and refrigerate the tart dough (you can also make it up to a month in advance and freeze it; just thaw overnight in the refrigerator before using).
- Make the soup; let cool and refrigerate.
- Make the Roquefort dip (but wait until the day of the party to add the garlic—otherwise, its flavor will become too strong).

### The day before:

- Prep the vegetables for the crudités and refrigerate in separate sealed containers.
- Assemble the stuffed mushrooms and refrigerate (hold off on drizzling them with olive oil until just before baking).
- Choose serving platters, baskets, and glassware and decide where you'll put them out.
- Cook the onions for the tart; cover and refrigerate.

### A few hours before guests arrive:

- Roll out the tart dough.
- Arrange the vegetables on a large, shallow basket or platter and refrigerate. Reserve some of each vegetable for replenishing.
- Stir the garlic into the Roquefort dip.
- Arrange the endive on a platter and cover with a damp paper towel. Slice the salmon and chives, put the crème fraîche in a piping bag or squeeze bottle, and cut the lemon. Refrigerate.
- Open the wine.

### Half an hour before guests arrive:

- Remove the stuffed mushrooms from the refrigerator.
- Use a spray bottle to lightly mist the crudités with water to keep the vegetables looking fresh. Set out the crudité platter.
- Gently reheat the soup.
- Heat the oven and spread the onions on the chilled tart dough, fold the edges, brush with the beaten egg, and pop the tart in the oven. Set the timer.
- Assemble the endive leaves, drape with plastic, and refrigerate.

### During the party:

- Set out the filled endives.
- Ladle the soup into the cups, garnish, and pass the cups on a tray lined with a napkin (to keep them from sliding).
- Transfer the onion tart to a cutting board, slice, and serve.
- Increase the oven temperature, drizzle the stuffed mushrooms with olive oil, and bake. Transfer to a platter and serve.

## Crudités with Creamy Roquefort Dip

*Serves sixteen.*

### **Kosher salt**

**1 pound broccoli**

**1 pound small or medium carrots, preferably with green tops**

**1 bunch celery (about 1¼ pounds)**

**1 medium head radicchio**

**1 medium fennel bulb, fronds trimmed**

**8 radishes, preferably with green tops**

**Creamy Roquefort Dip (recipe below right)**

**Prep the vegetables:** Combine 4 quarts water and ¼ cup kosher salt in a large pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Meanwhile, trim most of the stem off the broccoli to separate the florets. Using a small, sharp knife, trim the stem of each floret so it's 1½ to 2 inches long. Starting at the top of the stem (just beneath the tiny buds), cut through the stem lengthwise and divide the floret in half—preferably without using the knife to cut through the flowery buds. Repeat the process, dividing each floret into two to four pieces, until the top of each floret is about the size of a quarter. Have ready a bowl of ice water. Boil the florets until they turn bright green, about 1 minute. Drain the florets in a colander and then plunge them into the ice water to stop the cooking and set the broccoli's color. Drain again.

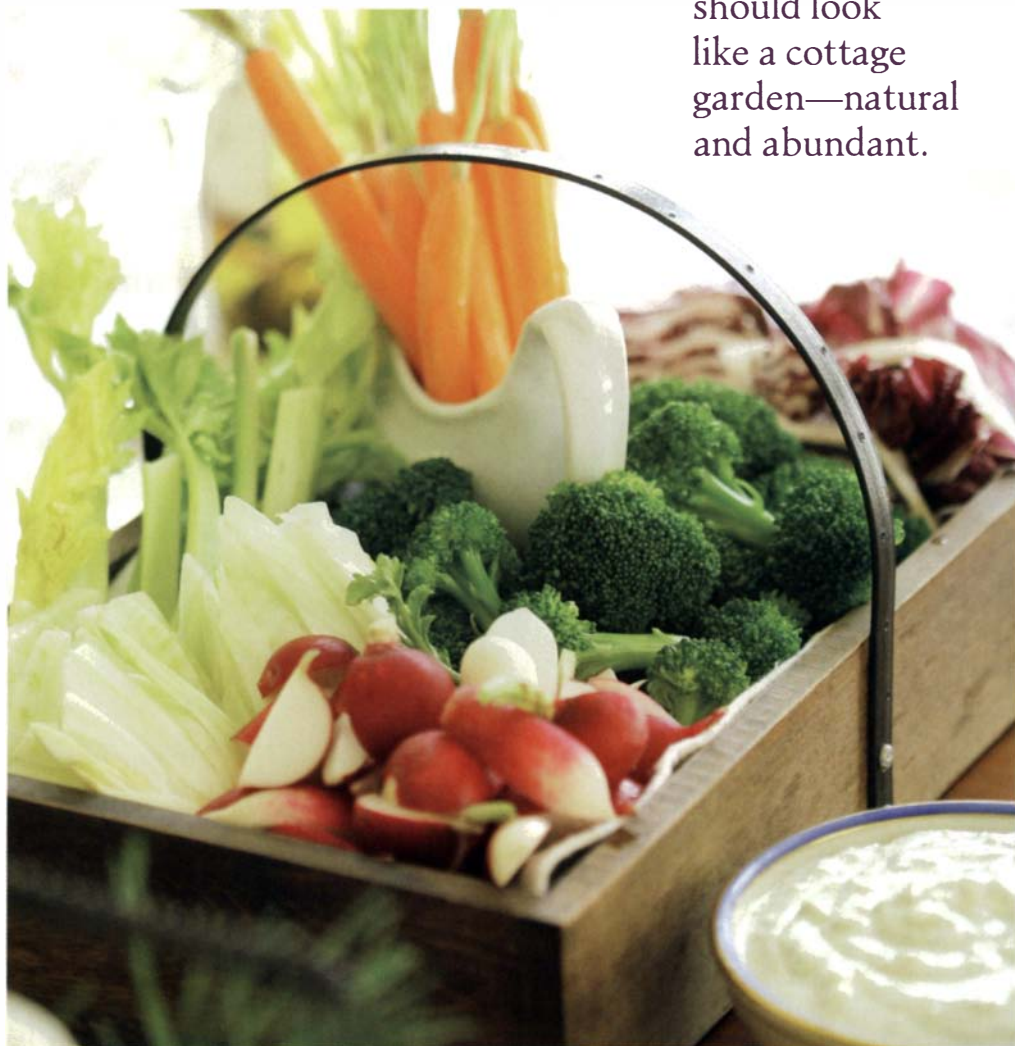
Trim the carrot tops, but leave about 1½ inches of the green tops intact. Peel the carrots and cut them lengthwise into halves, quarters, or sixths, depending on the size.

Remove the tough outer celery ribs; reserve for another use. Trim the tops of the ribs and about 1½ inches from the root end. Starting with the large ribs, cut each lengthwise into long, thin sticks about ¼ inch wide. Trim the large leaves from the celery heart and cut each rib in the same manner, preserving as much of the tender leaves as possible.

Discard the outer leaves of the radicchio. Trim the root end and cut the radicchio in half through the core. Cut each half into ¼-inch-thick wedges—the core should hold each wedge intact. Trim any stalks from the top of the fennel bulb and cut it in the same manner as the radicchio, but don't discard the outer layers unless they're discolored.

Trim the tops of the radishes, leaving about 1 inch of the green tops. (If the leaves are especially nice, leave a few intact for garnish.) Quarter each radish lengthwise.

**Store the vegetables:** Refrigerate them in separate sealed containers or zip-top bags. When ready to serve, arrange the vegetables on a large platter or in a shallow basket. Mist the crudité's lightly with water to keep them looking fresh. Serve with the dip on the side.



The crudité's should look like a cottage garden—natural and abundant.

## Creamy Roquefort Dip

*Yields about 2½ cups.*

**1 medium clove garlic**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**½ pound Roquefort**

**1½ cups crème fraîche (available in the specialty cheese section of some supermarkets) or sour cream**

**½ cup heavy cream**

In mortar or with the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Transfer to a medium bowl and add the Roquefort. Roughly mash the cheese with the back of a spoon. Stir in the crème fraîche or sour cream and several grinds of pepper, and then add the cream until the consistency is slightly thinner than sour cream. (It should cling to the vegetables nicely but not be thick and goopy.) Taste and add more salt and pepper if needed. Refrigerate until shortly before serving. (The dip will thicken in the refrigerator but will return to its original consistency as it comes to room temperature.)



*Store the prepped vegetables in separate airtight containers so they stay crisp.*



## Silky Leek & Celery Root Soup

*Yields about 24 two-ounce portions.*

For the best flavor, make this soup a day in advance.

**3 tablespoons unsalted butter**  
**2 medium leeks (white and light green parts only), trimmed, halved lengthwise, cut crosswise into thin half-moon slices, rinsed thoroughly, and drained**  
**1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced**  
**1 teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste**  
**1½ pounds celery root (about 1 large)**  
**¾ cup crème fraîche**  
**¼ cup heavy cream; more as needed**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**¼ cup thinly sliced fresh chives**

In a 4-quart or larger heavy-based pot, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the leeks, onion, and a generous pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until very soft and lightly golden but not brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Reduce the heat to low if you see signs of browning.

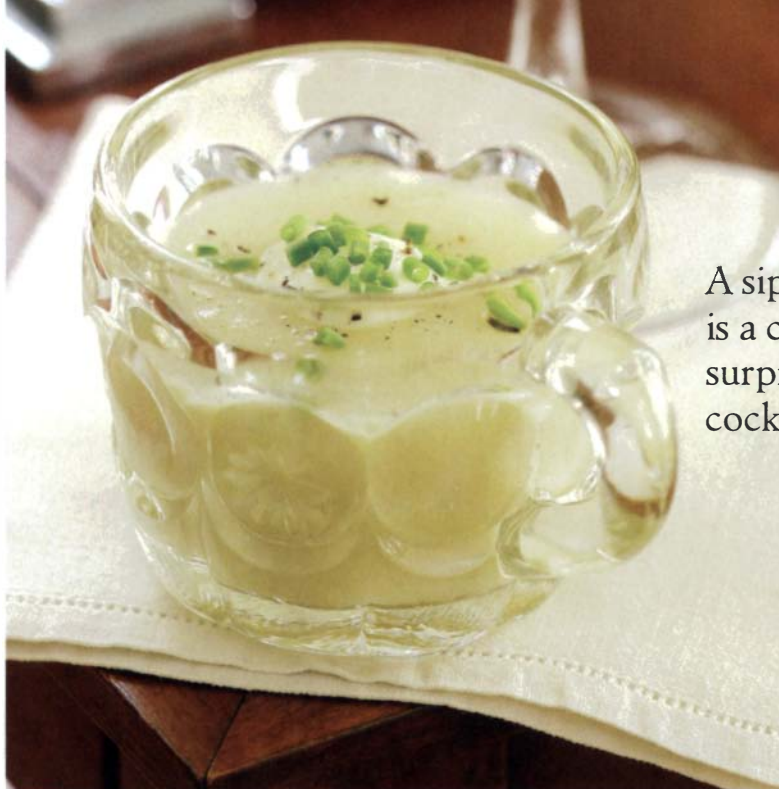
Meanwhile, peel the celery root with a sharp knife (expect to slice quite a bit off the exterior as you trim). Halve the peeled celery root lengthwise and cut each half into 1-inch-thick wedges. Cut each wedge crosswise into ¼-inch slices. You should have about 5 cups.

Add the celery root, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ cup water to the leeks. Cover and cook until the celery root is tender, 10 to 15 minutes. (Check occasionally; if all the water cooks off and the vegetables start to brown, add another ½ cup water.) Add 4½ cups water, bring to a simmer, and continue to cook another 20 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Purée the soup (with a hand blender, or in small batches in a stand blender) to a very smooth, creamy consistency. Let cool completely and then store in the refrigerator at least overnight or for up to two days.

About an hour before serving, put the crème fraîche in a small bowl and stir in enough of the heavy cream so that the mixture reaches the consistency of yogurt. Leave the cream mixture at room temperature until you are ready to serve the soup. (If the cream is too cold, it will cool the soup.)

Reheat the soup. (If it's too thick, gradually thin it with as much as 1 cup water.) Taste and add more salt as needed. Ladle the soup into small espresso cups or shot glasses. Top each portion with a small spoonful of crème fraîche (it should float on top of the soup). Finish each cup with a pinch of black pepper and a sprinkle of chives.



A sip of soup is a comforting surprise at a cocktail party.



## Smoked Salmon on Belgian Endive with Crème Fraîche & Chives

*Yields about 40 hors d'oeuvres.*

To get ahead, you can prep everything in advance, but for best results, assemble just before serving. Save any leftover chives for sprinkling on the celery root soup (at left).

**4 large heads Belgian endive, preferably a mix of green and red endive**  
**⅓ cup crème fraîche (available in the specialty cheese section of some supermarkets)**  
**¼ pound thinly sliced smoked salmon, cut crosswise into ¼-inch-wide strips**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**½ medium lemon**  
**1 small bunch fresh chives, sliced diagonally into ¼-inch segments**

Discard any damaged outer endive leaves. Trim the root end and separate the leaves. You should end up with 35 to 40 large leaves (save the small inner leaves for a salad). Arrange the leaves on a baking sheet.

Put the crème fraîche in a squeeze bottle or a small piping bag (for filling tips, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 78; you can also make a piping bag by trimming one corner of a small zip-top bag). Pipe a small dollop of crème fraîche on each endive leaf. Gently arrange a small pile (about 4 strips) of the sliced salmon on top of the crème fraîche. Season the salmon with some black pepper and a little squeeze of lemon juice. Sprinkle a few chives on top (you may not need them all), arrange the leaves on a platter, and serve.



Arrange the endive spears on a long, narrow platter for an elegant look.



For a casual presentation, serve the tarts right on the cutting board.



## Caramelized Onion & Thyme Tarts

*Yields 4 tarts; serves sixteen as a starter.*

You can make the tart dough a few days in advance and the filling up to a day ahead, but try to assemble and bake just before serving.

### FOR THE DOUGH:

**9 ounces (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**

**1 tablespoon granulated sugar**

**1¼ teaspoons kosher salt**

**6 ounces (12 tablespoons) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces**

### FOR THE TOPPING:

**1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil**

**1 tablespoon unsalted butter**

**3 medium yellow onions, very thinly sliced (about 4 cups)**

**2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme**

**Kosher salt**

**1 egg, lightly beaten**

**Make the dough:** Combine the flour, sugar, and salt in a large bowl. Add half of the butter and gently toss with your hands to coat each piece with flour. Using a pastry cutter or two table knives, cut the butter into the flour until it's the texture of coarse meal. Add the remaining butter, gently toss again to coat each piece, and quickly cut again until the larger pieces are about the size of large peas. In two

or three additions, sprinkle about ⅓ cup ice water into the bowl, lightly tossing the mixture between your fingers to moisten it evenly. Stop adding water when the dough looks ragged and rough but holds together when you gently squeeze a small clump in your palm. Shape the dough into a brick (be careful not to knead it, just squeeze it gently into a solid mass). Cut the dough in half crosswise. Press each half into a flat rectangle about ½ inch thick and wrap tightly in plastic. Refrigerate the dough for at least 2 hours. (The dough can also be refrigerated for up to two days or frozen for up to one month. Thaw it overnight in the refrigerator before using.)

**Make the topping:** Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute and then add the olive oil and butter. Once the butter has melted, add the onions, thyme, and ½ teaspoon salt and sauté until the onions are tender and lightly browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Taste the onions and add more salt if necessary—they should be well seasoned. Transfer the onions to a medium bowl and set aside to cool. (This may be done up to a day ahead; keep covered and refrigerate.)

**Roll the dough:** Remove one rectangle of dough from the fridge. Cut it in half cross-



wise. Working with one half at a time, roll it on a lightly floured surface into a ⅛-inch-thick narrow rectangle, about 14 inches long and 5 inches wide. (If the dough is too cold to roll easily, let it warm at room temperature for 10 to 20 minutes or until pliable.) Put the dough on a baking sheet lined with parchment (two narrow rectangles should fit side by side), top with a second sheet of parchment, and refrigerate. Repeat with the remaining dough and refrigerate until you're ready to prepare the tarts. (This may be done up to 4 hours ahead; keep covered. To conserve space, stack all four rectangles on one baking sheet between layers of parchment.)

**Assemble the tarts:** About 1 hour before serving, position oven racks in the upper and





For a crisp, golden-brown stuffing, drizzle with olive oil just before baking.

lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. About 40 minutes before serving, divide the onions into four equal portions and spread them in a thin, even layer on the dough rectangles, leaving a 1-inch border. (You may not need to use all the onions; a thick layer will weigh down the tart slices and they'll flop when your guests pick them up.) Fold the exposed border over the onions—if the dough is too thick in the corners, trim as necessary. Brush the folded edges with the egg. Bake the tarts until the crust is well browned, about 30 minutes, switching the positions of the baking sheets halfway through. Remove the tarts from the oven and let cool briefly on the baking sheet. Cut each tart into eight slices and serve.

## Stuffed Mushrooms with Pancetta, Shallots & Sage

*Yields 30 hors d'oeuvres.*

These can be prepared a day in advance and refrigerated—just let them come to room temperature before baking. Also, hold off on drizzling them with olive oil until just before baking.

**35 to 40 cremini mushrooms (about 1½ pounds), about 1½ to 2 inches wide**  
**3 tablespoons unsalted butter; more for the baking dish**  
**1½ ounces pancetta, finely diced (¼ cup)**  
**5 medium shallots, finely diced**  
**2 teaspoons chopped fresh sage**  
**Pinch dried red chile flakes**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**⅔ cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs (preferably from a day-old rustic French or Italian loaf)**  
**¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**  
**2 to 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. Trim and discard the very bottom of the mushroom stems. Remove the mushroom stems and finely chop them, along with five of the largest mushroom caps.

Heat a medium sauté pan over medium heat for 1 minute and add 2 tablespoons of the butter. When it has melted, add the pancetta and cook until it starts to render some of its fat, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the shallots, sage, and chile flakes; cook gently until the shallots are tender, about 4 minutes (reduce the heat if the shallots begin to brown). Stir in the chopped mushroom stems and ½ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring frequently, until the mixture is tender, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon butter. When it has melted, transfer the mushroom mixture to a bowl and stir in the breadcrumbs and Parmigiano. Season to taste with salt and pepper and let cool slightly.

Butter a shallow baking dish large enough to hold the mushrooms in one layer. Arrange the mushrooms in the dish and season the cavities with salt. Stuff each cavity with a rounded teaspoonful of the filling, or more as needed. The filling should form a tall mound. (You may have leftover filling; if you have extra mushrooms, keep stuffing until you run out of filling.) Drizzle the mushrooms with the olive oil and bake until the mushrooms are tender and the breadcrumbs are golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a platter and serve warm.



wine choices

## Choose a few versatile wines

Limiting the wine selections to just a few versatile choices is the best and most economical strategy when planning the drinks for your holiday hors d'oeuvres party. A dry sparkling wine, a crisp white wine, and medium-bodied red wine will each pair well with Tasha DeSerio's entire menu, so serve all three and let your guests choose according to preference.

The nonvintage Gruet Brut (\$14) from New Mexico or the nonvintage Gloria-Ferrer Brut (\$18) from Sonoma, California, are both outstanding sparklers that won't break the bank. For white wine, Sauvignon Blanc is one of the most food-friendly grapes around: the 2004 Geyser Peak from California (\$9) and the 2004 Giesen Estate from Marlborough, New Zealand (\$12), are both delicious values. Merlot is a good all-around red wine choice for a party like this. The 2004 Little Penguin from Southeastern Australia (\$8) and the 2002 Blackstone Sonoma County (\$16) both make for good sipping—and they're widely available.

—*Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier, is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.*  
*Retail prices are approximate.*

*Tasha DeSerio, the proprietor of Olive Green Catering in Berkeley, California, teaches and writes about cooking. ♦*



# 9 fabulous cookies from 3 easy doughs

BY ALICE MEDRICH

Imagine an assortment of homemade cookies suitable for a holiday dessert table or a knockout gift. Think almond sablés, brownie bowties, caramelized palmiers, classic rugelach, hazelnut crescents, cocoa wafers, chocolate thumbprints, and more. Even if you love to bake, and even if your fondest memories involve marathon cookie baking, such a dazzling array is a pretty big rabbit to pull out of any hat in these fast times. But there is a way to make it happen.

The trick is to make three doughs that serve as the base for all your cookies. Each dough morphs, with very little effort, into three diverse cookies. My Cocoa Cookie Dough and Almond Cookie Dough are quick to make, and so are the cookie variations. The flaky Cream Cheese Dough's variations require a tad more assembly, but the photos on pp. 60-61 will guide you. Tackle the whole project and get all nine cookies, or choose just one or two of the doughs and one or two variations.

Once baked, these cookies keep well. But if they won't be served within a day or two, your best bet is to freeze them in airtight containers. They defrost beautifully at room temperature.





Streamline your  
holiday cookie  
baking without  
sacrificing  
diversity





# Almond Cookie Dough

*Yields 3¾ cups (about 2 pounds) dough, enough for one batch each of the cookies at right.*

**½ cup granulated sugar**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**  
**4 ounces (¾ cup) whole almonds**  
**12 ounces (1½ cups) unsalted butter, cut in large chunks and slightly softened**  
**4 teaspoons pure vanilla extract**  
**¼ teaspoon pure almond extract**  
**13½ ounces (3 cups) bleached all-purpose flour**

Process the sugar and salt in a food processor until it looks powdery and a little finer, 30 to 60 seconds. Add the almonds and process until they're finely chopped, about 20 seconds. Add the butter and the vanilla and almond extracts. Pulse until the butter is smooth, scraping the bowl as necessary. Add the flour and pulse until a soft dough begins to form around the blade. Transfer the dough to a large bowl and stir briefly with a rubber spatula to be sure it's evenly mixed. Portion the dough into equal thirds. If you have a scale, weigh each third; each should weigh 10½ to 11 ounces. Make the variations at right before chilling the dough.

*From the top: Chocolate Thumbprints, Hazelnut Almond Crescents, Almond Sablés.*







*Be sure to fill the depressions completely for the most chocolatey flavor in every bite.*

### Chocolate Thumbprints

*Yields about 2 dozen cookies.*

**One-third of a batch (10½ to 11 ounces or 1¼ cups) freshly made Almond Cookie Dough (at far left)**

**¼ cup coarse sugar, such as turbinado, demerara, or sanding sugar**

**Chocolate Filling for Thumbprints (see the recipe at top right)**

Scoop up a generous teaspoonful (2 level teaspoons) of the dough and shape it into a 1-inch ball with your hands. Roll the ball in the sugar and set it on a tray lined with waxed paper. Repeat with the rest of the dough, setting the balls slightly apart. Press a thumb or forefinger, dipped in flour, into each ball to create a depression. Cover and refrigerate the cookies for at least 2 hours, but preferably overnight.

Remove the cookies from the refrigerator and arrange them 1 inch apart on an ungreased or foil-lined cookie sheet. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Let the cookies sit at room temperature while the oven heats. Bake the cookies for 10 minutes. Gently redefine the depressions with your thumb or the tip of a wooden spoon's handle, if necessary. Rotate the sheet and continue to bake until the tops are lightly colored and the bottoms are golden brown, another 8 to 12 minutes. Transfer the cookies to a rack and let cool completely. When cool, prepare the filling and spoon it into each depression.

### Chocolate Filling for Thumbprints

*Yields enough to fill 2 dozen thumbprint cookies.*

**2½ ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped**  
**5 teaspoons unsalted butter**

Put the chocolate and butter in a heatproof bowl set in a wide skillet of almost simmering water, or in the top of a double boiler. (Or microwave on medium power for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring after the first minute.) When the chocolate is almost completely melted, remove the bowl from the heat and stir until completely melted and smooth. If the filling hardens while using, reheat it in the pan of hot water.

### Hazelnut Almond Crescents

*Yields 24 to 28 cookies.*

You can turn these into double almond crescents by replacing the hazelnuts with the same quantity of whole almonds, toasted and chopped. These cookies taste even better after a day of storage.

**One-third of a batch (10½ to 11 ounces or 1¼ cups) freshly made Almond Cookie Dough (at far left)**

**4¾ ounces (1 cup) hazelnuts, toasted, skinned, and chopped medium coarsely (see p. 76)**

**1 to 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar; more as needed**

Use the back of a large spoon (or your hands) to work the hazelnuts into the dough. Shape level measuring tablespoons of dough into fat crescents and put them in a container lined with waxed paper. Cover and refrigerate the cookies for at least 2 hours, but preferably overnight.

Arrange the crescents 1 inch apart on an ungreased or foil-lined cookie sheet. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Let the cookies sit at room temperature while the oven heats. Bake the cookies until the tops are lightly colored and the bottoms are golden brown, 20 to 22 minutes,

rotating the sheet from front to back halfway through baking. Let the cookies cool on the sheet for about 5 minutes and then sift the confectioners' sugar over them. Transfer to a rack and let cool completely. Sift more confectioners' sugar over the cookies before serving if necessary.

### Almond Sablés

*Yields about 2 dozen cookies.*

**One-third of a batch (10½ to 11 ounces or 1¼ cups) freshly made Almond Cookie Dough (at far left)**

**1½ tablespoons granulated sugar**

**¼ cup turbinado (or granulated) sugar**

Use the back of a large spoon or a rubber spatula to mash the 1½ tablespoons granulated sugar into the dough until it's evenly dispersed. On a lightly floured surface, shape the dough into a log about 6 inches long and 1¾ inches in diameter. Wrap the log in waxed paper or foil. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, but preferably overnight.

Put the ¼ cup turbinado (or granulated) sugar on a flat surface such as a tray or clean countertop. Roll the log of dough in the sugar, pressing so the sugar adheres. Cut the log into ¼-inch slices and arrange them at least 1 inch apart on an ungreased or foil-lined cookie sheet. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Let the cookies sit at room temperature while the oven heats. Bake until the edges are golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes, rotating the pan from front to back about halfway through baking. Let the cookies sit on the sheet for a minute or two before transferring them to a rack with a metal spatula. Let cool completely before storing airtight.



# Cream Cheese Dough

*Yields about 2 pounds  
10 ounces dough, enough  
for one batch each of the  
cookies at right.*

Don't chill the dough for more than a couple of hours, as it becomes too hard to roll. If you must chill it longer, leave it at room temperature until it's pliable before proceeding.

**17 ounces (3¾ cups) bleached all-purpose flour**  
**3 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**¾ teaspoon table salt**  
**12 ounces (1½ cups) cold unsalted butter**  
**12 ounces cold cream cheese (in bricks; see p. 78)**

Combine the flour, sugar, and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. Using the paddle attachment, mix briefly to distribute the ingredients. Cut each stick of butter into eight pieces and add them to the bowl. Mix on low speed until most of the mixture resembles very coarse bread crumbs with a few larger pieces of butter the size of hazelnuts, about 3 minutes. Cut the cream cheese into 1-inch cubes and add them to the bowl. Mix on medium-low speed until a shaggy-looking dough begins to clump around the paddle, 30 to 60 seconds. Dump the dough onto the work surface, scraping the bowl. Knead a few times to incorporate any loose pieces. There should be large streaks of cream cheese. Shape it into a fat cylinder, 6 inches long and about 3½ inches in diameter. Wrap the dough in parchment or waxed paper and refrigerate until cold and slightly firm but not rock-hard, about 2 hours. Portion the dough by measuring the cylinder and cutting it into equal thirds. If you have a scale, weigh each third; each should weigh about 14 ounces.

*From the top: Classic Rugelach, Caramel-Glazed Cardamom Palmiers, Brownie Bowties.*

## Classic Rugelach

*Yields 2 dozen cookies.*

**½ cup finely chopped walnuts**  
**¼ cup dried currants**  
**¼ cup lightly packed light brown sugar**  
**1 tablespoon granulated sugar; more for sprinkling**  
**½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**One-third of a batch (about 14 ounces) chilled Cream Cheese Dough (at left)**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

In a small bowl, mix the walnuts, currants, brown sugar, granulated sugar, and cinnamon.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator, stand it up on its rounded edge, and cut it in half (as if halving a bagel) into two equal rounds. Return one half to

the refrigerator and, if necessary, let the other half sit at room temperature until pliable enough to roll. Roll on a lightly floured surface into a 12-inch round a scant ⅛ inch thick; check frequently to be sure it's not sticking and re-flour only if necessary. Sprinkle half of the filling over the dough. Roll a rolling pin over the filling to press it gently into the dough.

Cut the dough like a pie into 12 equal wedges. Roll the outside edge of a wedge up around the filling toward the narrow point. Set the roll on an ungreased or foil-lined cookie sheet with the point underneath to keep it from unrolling. Repeat with the remaining wedges, arranging the cookies 1½ inches apart. Roll, fill, cut, and shape the second round of dough with the remaining filling. Sprinkle

the rugelach with sugar. Bake until the cookies are light golden brown at the edges, 20 to 25 minutes, rotating the sheets from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking. Let the cookies cool for a few minutes on the sheets and then transfer them to a rack and let cool completely.



*Roll the rugelach gently and not too tightly.*



## Caramel-Glazed Cardamom Palmiers

*Yields 24 to 26 cookies.*

This is a much quicker and easier version of a very classic elegant pastry.

**One-third of a batch (about 14 ounces) chilled Cream Cheese Dough (at far left)**  
**½ cup granulated sugar**  
**½ teaspoon ground cardamom**  
**Pinch of table salt**

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and square off the dough by pressing the round edge on the counter four times. If necessary, let the dough sit at room temperature until pliable enough to roll. Mix the sugar with the cardamom. Transfer 1 tablespoon of the sugar mixture to a small cup and mix in the salt. Set aside.

Sprinkle the work surface liberally with some of the remaining cardamom sugar. Set the dough on the sugared surface and sprinkle it with more of the sugar. Turn the dough frequently and resugar it and the work surface liberally as you roll the dough into a 24x8-inch rectangle that's less than ⅛ inch thick. Use the sugar generously to prevent sticking and to ensure that the cookies will caramelize properly in the oven. Trim the edges of the rectangle evenly.

Mark the center of the dough with a small indentation. Starting at one short edge, fold about 2½ inches of dough almost one-third of the distance to the center mark. Without stretching or pulling, loosely fold the dough over two more times, leaving a scant ¼-inch space at the center mark. Likewise, fold the other end of the dough toward the center three times, leaving a tiny space at the center. The dough should now resemble a long, narrow open book (see the photo at top right). Fold one side of the dough over the other side, as if closing the book. You should have an eight-layer strip of dough about 2½ inches wide and 8 inches long.

Sprinkle the remaining cardamom sugar under and on



*After folding in both sides of the palmier dough three times, you should have a ¼-inch gap between the two sides. Then fold one side over the other, as if closing a book.*

top of the dough. Roll gently from one end of the dough to the other to compress the layers and lengthen the strip to about 9 inches. Wrap the dough loosely in waxed paper (not plastic wrap, which might cause moisture to form on the outside of the dough and dissolve the sugar). Refrigerate the dough for at least 30 minutes or up to 4 hours.

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, unwrap it, and use a sharp knife to trim the ends evenly. Cut ⅓-inch slices (I mark the dough at 1-inch intervals and cut three slices from each inch) and arrange them 1½ inches apart on two ungreased or foil-lined cookie sheets. Bake until the undersides are golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes, rotating the pans from top to bottom and front to back about halfway through baking.

Remove the pans from the oven and turn the cookies over. Sprinkle each one with a pinch or two of the reserved salted sugar mixture. Return the sheets to the oven until the cookies are deep golden brown, another 3 to 5 minutes. Rotate the pans and watch the cookies carefully at this stage to prevent burning. If the cookies brown at different rates, remove the dark ones and let the lighter ones continue to bake. Transfer the cookies to a rack and let cool completely. Store airtight.

## Brownie Bowties

*Yields 2 dozen cookies.*

**One-third of a batch (about 14 ounces) chilled Cream Cheese Dough (at far left)**  
**Chilled Brownie Filling (see the recipe below right)**  
**1 tablespoon granulated sugar; more as needed**

Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line two cookie sheets with foil.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator, stand it up on its rounded edge, and cut it in half (as if halving a bagel) into two equal rounds. Return one



*To make the bowtie shape, pick up two corners of a square, moisten with water, and overlap one side over the other. Press on the dough to seal it and also to flatten the filling slightly.*

round to the refrigerator and, if necessary, let the other dough round sit at room temperature until pliable enough to roll. Square off the dough by pressing the round edge on the counter four times. Roll on a lightly floured surface into a 9x11-inch rectangle a scant ⅛ inch thick. As you roll, check frequently to be sure it isn't sticking and re-flour lightly as needed.

With a pastry wheel (for nice zigzag edges; for sources, see p. 86) or a knife, trim the rectangle to even the edges. Cut the dough crosswise into quarters and lengthwise into thirds to make 12 squares. Set 1 rounded teaspoon of the brownie filling in the center of each square. Set a dish of water on the counter. Pick up two opposite corners of

a square, moisten one with a wet fingertip, overlap the corners by about ½ inch, and gently press them together over the filling to seal the dough and flatten the filling slightly. Transfer to a foil-lined baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining squares of dough, arranging the cookies 1½ inches apart. If the dough becomes too soft to handle at any point, refrigerate briefly to firm it. Roll and fill the second piece of dough.

Sprinkle the cookies liberally with sugar. Put both sheets in the oven and bake until golden brown on the bottom, 17 to 20 minutes, rotating the pans from top to bottom and front to back about halfway through baking. Let the cookies cool on the sheets for a few minutes before transferring them to racks to cool completely.

## Brownie Filling for Bowties

*Yields 1 cup.*

**2 ounces (¼ cup) unsalted butter, cut into 5 or 6 pieces**  
**2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, coarsely chopped**  
**Scant ½ cup granulated sugar**  
**½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
**⅛ teaspoon table salt**  
**1 cold large egg**  
**1 tablespoon all-purpose flour**

Melt the butter and chocolate in a metal bowl set in a skillet of barely simmering water, or in the top of a double boiler. Stir frequently with a rubber spatula until the mixture is melted and smooth. Remove the bowl from the water or double boiler. Stir in the sugar, vanilla, and salt. Stir in the egg. Add the flour and stir until the mixture is smooth and glossy and cohesive, about a minute. Cover and refrigerate until the filling thickens and is fudgy, at least 1 hour.



# Cocoa Cookie Dough

*Yields 4 cups dough (about 2 pounds 5 ounces), enough for one batch each of the cookies at right.*

**10 ounces (2¼ cups) bleached all-purpose flour**  
**3⅓ ounces (1 cup plus 2 tablespoons) unsweetened natural cocoa powder**  
**1⅔ cups granulated sugar**  
**¾ teaspoon table salt**  
**¾ teaspoon baking soda**  
**10½ ounces (1 cup plus 5 tablespoons) unsalted butter, slightly softened**  
**4½ tablespoons whole milk**  
**1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract**

In a food processor, combine the flour, cocoa, sugar, salt, and baking soda. Pulse several times to mix thoroughly. Cut the butter into about 12 chunks and add them to the bowl. Pulse several times. Combine the milk and vanilla in a small cup. With the processor running, add the milk mixture and continue to process until the dough clumps around the blade or the sides of the bowl. Transfer the dough to a large bowl or cutting board and knead with your hands a few times to make sure the dough is evenly blended. Portion the dough into equal thirds. If you have a scale, weigh each third; each should weigh about 12 ounces. Make the variations at right before chilling the dough.

*From the top: Bittersweet Mocha Cookies, Chocolate Chunk Cookies with Dried Cherries & Pecans, and Crunchy Cocoa Wafers.*







### **Bittersweet Mocha Cookies**

*Yields about 28 2-inch cookies.*

Extra chocolatey and laced with freshly ground coffee, these cookies are slightly crunchy on the outside and chewy within.

**One-third of a batch (about 12 ounces or 1 1/3 cups) freshly made Cocoa Cookie Dough (at far left)**

**3 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, very finely chopped or pulverized in a food processor to the size of coarse crumbs**

**1/4 teaspoon finely ground coffee beans, plus 28 whole beans (regular, not espresso roast), or as needed**

**About 1/4 cup granulated or coarse decorating sugar**

Put the dough in a mixing bowl. Add the chocolate and ground coffee and mix them in thoroughly with a rubber spatula or your hands. Shape the dough into a log 14 inches long and about 1 1/4 inches in diameter. Wrap in waxed paper or foil and refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour or overnight.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment.

Put the sugar in a small bowl. Cut the dough into 1/2-inch slices. Coat both sides with the sugar. Arrange the cookies 1 1/2 inches apart on the lined sheet and press a coffee bean into the center of each cookie. Bake until the cookies puff and show very faint cracks on the surface, 9 to 10 minutes (the cookies will feel soft to the touch). Slide the parchment onto a rack and let the cookies cool completely.

### **Chocolate Chunk Cookies With Dried Cherries & Pecans**

*Yields 24 to 30 2-inch cookies.*

**One-third of a batch (about 12 ounces or 1 1/3 cups) freshly made Cocoa Cookie Dough (at far left)**

**2 1/2 ounces (2/3 cup) toasted and coarsely chopped pecans**

**1/2 cup bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips or chunks**

**3 ounces (1/2 cup) dried tart cherries, very coarsely chopped**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment.

Put the dough in a mixing bowl. Mix in the pecans, chocolate, and dried cherries. Drop more or less level tablespoons of the dough 2 inches apart on the lined sheet. Bake, rotating the sheet about halfway through, until the surface looks dry and the cookies are soft but not too squishy when pressed lightly with your finger, about 12 minutes. Slide the parchment onto a rack and let the cookies cool completely.

### **Crunchy Cocoa Wafers**

*Yields 28 to 30 cookies.*

**One-third of a batch (about 12 ounces or 1 1/3 cups) freshly made Cocoa Cookie Dough (at far left)**

Shape the dough into a log about 7 inches long and 1 3/4 inches in diameter. Wrap the log in waxed paper or foil. Refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour or overnight.

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment.

Cut the log into slices a scant 1/4 inch thick and arrange them 1 inch apart on the lined sheet. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, rotating the sheet about halfway through. As they bake, the cookies will puff a little and then deflate; they're done about 1 minute after they deflate. The tops of the cookies will look slightly pitted, and they'll feel dry but soft when touched (the cookie will hold an impression). Slide the parchment onto a rack and let the cookies cool completely, at which point they should be perfectly dry and crunchy.

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*Alice Medrich is the author of several award-winning cookbooks. Her latest book is *Chocolate Holidays*. ♦*

**All nine of the cookies here stay fresh for at least a few days, but for longer storage, freeze them in airtight containers.**

# Come On

On a leisurely morning, delight your friends with a homey menu that everyone will love

## brunch

for six to eight

Sparkling  
Pomegranate  
Cocktail

Spinach &  
Mushroom Frittata



Hazelnut Waffles  
with Berry  
Compote &  
Crème Fraîche  
Whipped Cream

Apple, Sage &  
Fennel Breakfast  
Sausage

For a timetable, see p. 68.

BY NICOLE REES

**W**eekday breakfasts are hurried, solitary meals for me. I'm usually standing, pacing the house looking for my cell phone, or checking my email. Weekends are different. I take advantage of the gift of time and make something wonderful to share with friends and family. When they hear the invitation

to "come over for brunch," I can tell they're excited.

Because breakfast food is simple to make and can often be prepped ahead, brunch is an easy way to entertain and make someone else's weekend festive, too. And when I think of brunch, I'm not thinking soup or salad—I'm thinking really delicious breakfast food that you



# Over for Brunch

Sweet-tart berries and whipped cream add an elegant touch to these toasty waffles.





don't have time to make during the week. I want brunch to carry me through the day to dinner, and this menu fits the bill. The recipes are all classics—frittata, sausage patties, and waffles—but with flavors evocative of the Pacific Northwest, where I live.

I'm crazy about our local wild mushrooms, so I've included sautéed mushrooms along with baby spinach in the frittata. Don't worry if you can't find wild mushrooms locally; you can use shiitakes, which are widely available. Though not wild, they lend a hearty texture and complex flavor to the eggs. The pork sausage patties are spiced with the usual fresh sage and thyme, but become more memorable with sautéed apple—another Oregon specialty—and crushed fennel seeds. If you've never made homemade breakfast sausage before, you'll be surprised how easy and satisfying it is. Plus, the sage and apple make the house smell wonderful.

And last, finely ground toasted hazelnuts give the waffles a decidedly Northwest flair. You can serve them with warm maple syrup (I like grade B amber maple syrup; for sources, see p. 86), which really enhances the waffles' hazelnut flavor, but I think it's nice to offer other toppings, too. The mixed berry compote and crème fraîche whipped cream are just the things. Here in the Northwest, I use blackberry varieties such as Marion berries and boysenberries, but you can use any combination of mixed berries—and frozen are fine, too.

**Frittatas are great  
for entertaining  
because they can  
be served hot,  
warm, or at room  
temperature.**



Perfect with cocktails

### **Spinach & Mushroom Frittata**

*Serves eight.*

You can prepare the mushroom mixture the day ahead, but make the frittata about 30 minutes before your guests arrive and cover to keep it warm.

- ¼ cup unsalted butter**
- 6 ounces fresh shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, caps sliced ¼ inch thick (about 2½ cups)**
- 3 ounces (about 3 lightly packed cups) baby spinach leaves, large stems trimmed, leaves thinly sliced**
- ½ cup thinly sliced fresh chives**
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt**
- 10 large eggs**
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream**
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

In a 12-inch skillet, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add the mushrooms and sauté until softened and browned, 6 to 8 minutes. If flavorful browned bits are sticking to the bottom of the pan, stir in 1 or 2 tablespoons of water to deglaze the pan. The water will evaporate quickly. In a large bowl, toss the hot mushrooms with the sliced spinach until well combined. The heat of the mushrooms will wilt the spinach. Stir in the chives and ¼ teaspoon of the

salt. If preparing a day ahead, cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Position a rack 6 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler on high. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, cream, 2 tablespoons water, the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon of the pepper. Stir the mushroom and spinach mixture into the eggs.

In a 12-inch ovenproof skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons butter over medium-high heat, swirling the pan so the butter coats the sides. Add the eggs to the pan, evenly distributing the spinach and mushrooms, and sprinkle with the remaining ¼ teaspoon pepper. Cook until the eggs begin to set and the bottom begins to brown, occasionally lifting the sides with a spatula to let uncooked egg run underneath, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer the pan to the broiler. Broil until the eggs are almost fully set and the top puffs and browns, 1 to 5 minutes, depending on your broiler. Check the frittata every minute to avoid overbrowning. Let stand for 5 minutes before sliding out of the pan onto a cutting board. Slice into squares or wedges and serve warm or at room temperature.





### Sparkling Pomegranate Cocktail

*Yields 6 cocktails.*

One bottle of sparkling wine is enough to make about six cocktails in medium-size champagne flutes. You can easily double or even triple this recipe.

- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons unsweetened pure pomegranate juice (such as Pom brand), chilled**
- 3 tablespoons sugar syrup (see the recipe below right), chilled**
- 1 750ml bottle dry sparkling wine or Champagne, chilled**

In a small pitcher, stir the pomegranate juice and sugar syrup. Fill each flute about one-third full with the pomegranate mixture. Top with the sparkling wine, dividing it evenly among the flutes. Serve immediately.

### Sparkler choices

For the Pomegranate Cocktail, you'll want a modestly priced sparkling wine that tastes good enough to sip on its own, but that you'll feel all right about mixing. There are plenty of choices. Let price be your guide, and steer clear of anything over \$16. Save the Champagne and good nonvintage sparkling wines for sipping on their own: Their nuances get lost once blended with mixers.

**Here are five sparklers that are just fine for both sipping and mixing:**

**NV Segura Viudas Cava Brut Reserva, Spain, \$10**

**2000 Seaview Brut, Australia, \$10**

**NV Domaine Ste. Michelle Brut, Washington, \$10**

**2002 Sainte-Hilaire Blanquette de Limoux, France, \$12**

**NV Ruggeri Prosecco (Gold Label), Italy, \$16**

Retail prices are approximate.

—*Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier and contributing editor to Fine Cooking*

### Sugar Syrup

*Yields a scant 2/3 cup, enough to make about 15 cocktails.*

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar**
- 1/2 cup water**

In a small saucepan, bring the sugar and water to a boil over high heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Boil for 1 minute. Let cool and then refrigerate until ready to use.



### Apple, Sage & Fennel Breakfast Sausage

*Yields 16 2 1/2-inch patties; serves eight.*

The patties can be kept warm for up to an hour, but the more freshly cooked they are, the juicier they'll taste.

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil; more as needed**
- 2 tart cooking apples (15 ounces total), like Granny Smith or Pink Lady, peeled, cored, and cut into 1/4-inch dice**
- 1 bunch scallions, thinly sliced, white and green parts divided**
- 2 pounds ground pork (avoid pork labeled "extra tender," if possible)**
- 1/2 cup loosely packed fresh sage leaves, finely chopped**
- 1 1/2 teaspoons fennel seeds, crushed in a mortar or lightly chopped**
- 1 teaspoon table salt**
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**

Heat the oven to 200°F. In a 10-inch skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium heat. Add the apples and the scallion whites. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the apples soften and just begin to brown, 5 to 8 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes. In a large bowl, combine the apple mixture with the pork, scallion greens, sage, fennel seeds, salt, and pepper. Mix with your hands until well combined, but don't compact the mixture. Gently shape into 16 patties, about 3 inches in diameter and 3/4 inch thick.

In a 12-inch heavy skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil over medium-low to medium heat. Cook the sausages (in three batches so they're not crowded) until nicely browned and cooked through, about 5 minutes per side. Add more oil only if needed after each batch, and adjust the heat to prevent overbrowning. Keep the sausages warm on a baking sheet in the oven, covered with foil.



## Timeline

Up to two days ahead:

Make the sugar syrup for the cocktails.

Make the berry compote.

Up to one day ahead:

Make the crème fraîche whipped cream.

Toast, skin, and grind the hazelnuts for the waffles and assemble the dry ingredients.

Prepare the sausage mixture and shape into patties.

Prepare the mushroom-spinach mixture for the frittata.

Chill the cocktail ingredients.

Up to 2 hours before guests arrive:

Make the waffle batter.

Up to 1 hour before guests arrive:

Cook the sausage patties.

20 minutes before guests arrive:

Make the frittata.

While guests are having cocktails and the frittata:

Make the waffles, warm the maple syrup, and reheat the sausages.

## Hazelnut Waffles

*Yields 6½ cups batter, enough for about 12 standard waffles.*

**3 ounces (⅔ cup) hazelnuts, toasted and skinned (see p. 76)**

**9 ounces (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**

**2¾ ounces (⅔ cup) cake flour**

**1 tablespoon baking powder**

**½ teaspoon baking soda**

**¾ teaspoon table salt**

**2¾ cups buttermilk**

**½ cup vegetable oil**

**4 large eggs**

**⅓ cup granulated sugar**

**1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract**

**Vegetable oil or nonstick cooking spray for the waffle iron**

**Berry Compote, Crème Fraîche Whipped Cream (see the recipes at right), warm maple syrup, and butter for serving**

With a rotary grater (for sources, see p. 86), finely grind the hazelnuts. (Or process the hazelnuts with 2 tablespoons of the flour in a food processor until finely ground.) In a large bowl, whisk the ground hazelnuts, all-purpose and cake flours, baking powder, baking soda, and table salt until well combined. In another bowl, whisk the buttermilk, oil, eggs, sugar, and vanilla until well combined. With a very open whisk or a rubber spatula, lightly stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until just combined (small lumps in the batter are fine). Let the batter rest for at least 20 minutes (and up to 2 hours in the refrigerator). Cook the waffles according to your waffle iron manufacturer's instructions. In a Belgian waffle maker, the waffles have a tender interior; in a standard waffle maker, they'll be crisper.



Bring the iron to the table and cook the waffles to order.



# Tips for the waffle novice

During one extended period in my life, I ate a homemade Belgian waffle every day. Consequently, I have more waffle experience than the average person. For a while, I kept batter ready in the fridge and dutifully warmed the waffle iron every morning. Things went faster once I realized I could freeze a whole batch of waffles and toast them in the oven. Once you discover how easy it is to make waffles, I think you'll be a convert, too.

## LET THE WAFFLE-MAKING BE PART OF THE PARTY.

To maximize the toasty hazelnut flavor that makes these waffles special, make the batter no more than 2 hours before your guests arrive. People like to watch waffles being made, so don't be shy about cooking the waffles while you and your guests have cocktails. Keep the waffles warm until it's time to eat by spreading them—don't stack them—directly on a rack in a 200°F oven. Or, bring the waffle maker right to the table and cook them to order.

## MORE TIPS FOR WAFFLE SUCCESS:

Always let your waffle iron heat up until a few drops of water flicked on the surface sizzle.

Grease the waffle iron between waffles by applying a light coating of nonstick cooking spray or brushing on a light coating of vegetable oil.

Give the waffle iron a minute to heat the oil after you apply it.

If the “ready” light or alarm on your waffle maker corresponds to a level of doneness you like, great. If not, don't be afraid to peek under the lid after a couple minutes. You can always leave the waffle in longer if it's too pale, or crisp it further in the oven.



## Berry Compote

*Yields about 3 cups.*

Sweet-tart berries are the perfect complement to the toasted hazelnuts in the waffles.

**2 teaspoons cornstarch**  
**1 tablespoon fruit brandy or water**  
**2 10-ounce packages frozen mixed berries (or 4 heaping cups), thawed, with their juices**  
**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**Finely grated zest from 1 lemon**  
**¼ teaspoon ground allspice**  
**¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon**

In a small bowl, dissolve the cornstarch in the brandy or water. Set aside. Combine the thawed berries and their juices, sugar, lemon zest, allspice, and cinnamon in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring often until the sugar dissolves. When bubbles appear on the side of the pan, just before the fruit reaches a full boil, quickly stir in the cornstarch mixture. Let the fruit boil for only 1 minute to cook the cornstarch; overcooking will make the fruit disintegrate. Remove from the heat. The compote will thicken further as it cools. Make the compote a day or two ahead and refrigerate until needed. The compote may be served at room temperature or slightly warm.

## Crème Fraîche Whipped Cream

*Yields about 3 cups.*

Rich and tangy crème fraîche adds a wonderful zing to whipped cream. I love how it brightens the flavor of the berry compote and makes the hazelnut waffles even yummiier. This can be made a day ahead.

**4 ounces (½ cup) crème fraîche (available in the specialty cheese section of some supermarkets)**  
**3 tablespoons granulated sugar**  
**1 cup cold heavy cream**

In a large bowl, whisk the crème fraîche with the sugar until smooth. In a separate large bowl, whip the cream with an electric hand-held or stand mixer until the cream just barely reaches the firm-peak stage (it should hold a peak when the beater is pulled away, but it shouldn't be grainy). With a rubber spatula, gently fold half of the whipped cream into the crème fraîche and then gently fold in the remaining half. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve; whisk a few times before serving.

*Nicole Rees, co-author of Understanding Baking, lives and bakes in Portland, Oregon. ♦*




# Impressive Éclairs, Step by Step



This bakeshop  
classic is easier  
to make than  
you'd think





BY CAROLYN WEIL

Éclairs were a staple on the menu at the bakery I used to own. One customer in particular, a stockbroker turned Berkeley hippie, liked them so much that he'd stop in for one just about every day, because, as he once told me, éclairs make even the worst day a good one.

Well, you don't have to be a professional baker to brighten someone's day with these creamy, chocolaty treats. Truth be told, you can easily make éclairs at home at your own pace.

An éclair starts with *pâte à choux*, which is simply water, butter, and flour cooked on the stove and then mixed with eggs, scooped or piped onto baking sheets, and baked. The dough rises quickly in the oven, becoming crisp buttery puffs, hollow in the middle. The filling is a sweet vanilla custard lightened with whipped cream. And on top—a glistening crown of bittersweet chocolate ganache.

You can make each component separately over the course of a few days (or even weeks) and assemble the éclairs when you're ready to serve them. All it takes to get started are a few tools, some basic ingredients, and a plan.

## Follow this 5 step plan

**1** Up to six weeks ahead, make the shells. Store them in an airtight container at room temperature for up to two days, or freeze them for up to six weeks in a zip-top freezer bag.

**2** Up to two weeks ahead, make the ganache. You can store it tightly covered in the refrigerator until ready to use.

**3** Up to a day ahead, make the pastry cream for the filling. Refrigerate it for at least an hour and up to a day before using.

**4** About 15 minutes before you're ready to fill the éclairs, make the whipped cream and fold it into the chilled pastry cream.

**5** Up to 3 hours before serving, assemble and glaze the éclairs. Chill the glazed éclairs for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours.

### TOOLS

parchment  
rimmed baking  
sheet  
pencil  
medium and  
small sauce-  
pans  
stand mixer  
pastry bag  
and a large  
star tip (for  
sources see  
p. 86)  
cooling rack  
bowls  
whisk  
space in the  
fridge

### PANTRY

unsalted butter  
table salt  
all-purpose  
flour  
large eggs  
bittersweet  
chocolate  
heavy cream  
light corn  
syrup  
whole milk  
sugar  
cornstarch  
pure vanilla  
extract  
confectioners'  
sugar

# 1 Make the shells and store them for later.

## Éclair Dough (Pâte à Choux)

*Yields enough dough for 12 to 13 éclairs.*

**2 ounces (¼ cup) unsalted butter**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**  
**4½ ounces (1 cup) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**3 large eggs**



Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Cut a sheet of parchment to fit in a heavy-duty 13x18-inch rimmed baking sheet. Using a pencil, **draw three sets of two lines spaced 3 inches apart, running the length of the parchment**, as shown in photo above. These will be guide-lines for piping the éclair dough. Line the baking sheet with the parchment, penciled side down—you should be able to see the lines through the parchment. If not, draw them darker.



In a medium saucepan, bring the butter, salt, and 1 cup water to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and add the flour. Using a wooden spoon, stir vigorously to combine. Continue to stir, using a figure-eight motion and smearing the dough against the sides of the pan to cook the flour and work out any lumps, for 2 minutes. **The mixture will be thick and look like a firm ball**, or balls, of sticky mashed potatoes that pull away from the pan sides. During this process, it's normal for a thin layer of dough to stick to the bottom of the pan and sizzle.



Remove the pan from the heat and scrape the dough into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. **On low speed, mix until the dough feels merely warm to the touch**, not hot, 3 to 5 minutes.

## All in the family: cream puffs and profiteroles

The pastry dough known as *pâte à choux* is the basis for a whole family of desserts that includes éclairs and its cousins, cream puffs and profiteroles. Apart from shape, the main dif-

ference between a cream puff, which is round, and an éclair, which is oblong, is that you fill cream puffs with straight whipped cream and dust the tops with confectioners' sugar instead of

chocolate. Profiteroles are round like a cream puff but get filled with a scoop of ice cream instead of whipped cream. Both cream puffs and profiteroles are beautiful plated in a pool of choco-

late or caramel sauce, or a berry purée. For a cream-puff variation, you can fold espresso powder, puréed berries, or chopped toasted nuts into the whipped cream. —C. W.



I don't double this recipe because it becomes a struggle to stir the dough in the pan. It's better to make multiple batches of dough if you want to make more éclairs.



With the mixer still on low, beat in the eggs one at a time. **After each egg is added, the dough will separate into small lumps** and then come back together. After the dough pulls back together, briefly (about 20 seconds) increase the speed to medium low to mix the dough well. Reduce the speed to low before adding the next egg. After the addition of the last egg, scrape the bowl well and beat on medium low for a final 30 seconds.



Scrape the dough into a pastry bag fitted with a large star tip. (For more information on using a pastry bag, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 78.) Twist the top of the bag to push the dough toward the tip. Hold the bag at a 60-degree angle and set the tip of the pastry tube on the paper, right at the top of one of the 3-inch-wide stripes you drew earlier. Squeeze the pastry bag and, **using the lines on the parchment as a guide, pipe out 3-inch lengths of dough in a tight zigzag pattern** (as shown in the photo above), spacing the éclairs about 1 inch apart.



**Bake until the shells are puffed, crisp, and thoroughly golden brown, 45 to 50 minutes.** If you find that they're baking unevenly, rotate the pan. Remove from the oven, transfer to a rack, and let cool completely, about 15 minutes, before filling or storing.

#### MAKE-AHEAD TIP:

Store the shells in an airtight container at room temperature for up to two days. Or freeze them in an airtight plastic freezer bag for up to six weeks. To refresh the shells before assembling, arrange them on a baking sheet and warm them in a 350°F oven until dry, firm, and almost crisp, 10 to 15 minutes for room-temperature shells, 15 to 20 minutes for frozen shells. Let cool before using.

*Continued...*

## 2 Make the ganache.

### Bittersweet Ganache

*Yields about ¾ cup.*

The corn syrup is optional for this recipe but it helps keep the chocolate glossy when refrigerated.

**4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped (I prefer 55% to 63% bittersweet chocolate; for sources, see p. 86)**

**½ cup heavy cream**

**1 teaspoon light corn syrup**



**Stovetop:** In a small saucepan, warm the cream over medium heat until the cream begins to simmer around the edges of the pan. **Remove from heat and add the chopped chocolate pieces** and the corn syrup. Let stand for 5 to 7 minutes and then stir until smooth.

**Microwave:** In a Pyrex cup, combine the chocolate, cream, and corn syrup. Microwave at 50% power for 30 seconds. Stir to combine. If just a few unmelted chunks of chocolate remain, let the heat of the mixture melt the remaining few chunks. If more than a few chunks remain, microwave at 50% power for another 30 seconds.

#### MAKE-AHEAD TIP:

Refrigerate the ganache, tightly covered, for up to two weeks. Warm it by placing it in a large bowl of hot tap water and stirring until smooth.

## 3 Make the pastry cream.

The debate over pastry cream versus whipped cream filling in éclairs has raged on for years. Truth is, both are great—but what I like best of all is a hybrid of the two: vanilla pastry cream lightened with whipped cream.



### Vanilla Pastry Cream

*Yields about 1 cup.*

**1 cup whole milk**

**3 large egg yolks**

**¼ cup granulated sugar**

**2 tablespoons cornstarch**

**⅛ teaspoon table salt**

**½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

Warm the milk in a medium saucepan over medium heat until tiny bubbles appear. Meanwhile, in a medium heatproof bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar until pale yellow. Add the cornstarch and salt and whisk well.

Pour the hot milk into the yolk mixture, ½ cup at a time, whisking constantly. Return the mixture to the saucepan and **cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until it thickens to the consistency of thick pudding**, about 2 minutes. (It will look lumpy as it starts to thicken but will smooth out as you continue to whisk.)

Remove from the heat and scrape the pastry cream into a large clean metal bowl. Whisk in the vanilla and then lay a sheet of plastic wrap directly on the surface. Refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, about 1 hour.

#### MAKE-AHEAD TIP:

The pastry cream needs to chill for at least 1 hour before use and may be made ahead and refrigerated for up to a day.



# 4

## Fold whipped cream into the pastry cream.

### Whipped Cream

*Yields about 2 cups.*

1 cup heavy cream, well chilled  
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract



Combine the cream, confectioners' sugar, and vanilla in a chilled mixing bowl and whisk by hand or with an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment until the cream becomes fluffy and forms a soft peak that folds over when you lift the whisk. Be careful not to overwhip the cream or you risk it curdling when you fold it into the custard.

Combine the pastry cream and whipped cream: Whisk the pastry cream until smooth and then gently whisk in about one-third of the whipped cream to lighten the pastry cream. Scrape the rest of the whipped cream over the mixture and, **using the whisk in a folding action, gently blend the two** until the mixture is uniform and smooth.

### ASSEMBLY TIP:

Lighten the pastry cream with the whipped cream just before filling the éclairs.

# 5

## Assemble the éclairs.



Cut an éclair shell in half lengthwise with a serrated knife. Use your fingers to pinch out the doughy insides of both halves.

Use two soup spoons—one to scoop and the other to push the cream off the spoon—to **mound the filling into the entire length of the bottom half of the shell**, about 2 to 3 tablespoons filling per shell. Gently place the top half of the éclair shell on the custard and put the assembled éclair on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining shells.



### MAKE-AHEAD TIP:

The finished éclairs need to chill for at least 30 minutes, but don't wait longer than 3 hours to serve them.

When all the éclairs are assembled, warm the ganache a little, just until it's warm enough to flow off the side of a spoon in a wide, thick ribbon. (If the ganache is too hot, it will run off the éclairs and puddle below on the tray.) **Spoon the ganache along the entire length of each éclair top.** Put the sheet of glazed éclairs in the refrigerator and chill for at least 30 minutes or up to 3 hours before serving.

*Carolyn Weil is a contributor to The Baker's Dozen Cookbook and the author of Williams-Sonoma's Pie & Tart.* ♦

Skinning hazelnuts	76
Using a bench knife	76
Filling a pastry bag	78
Choosing cream cheese	78
Cookie vs. baking sheet	78
All about cream	80
Peeling ginger	80
Measuring sticky stuff	80
Rescuing whipped cream	82
Breaking eggs	82

BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

## There's more than one way to skin a hazelnut

The skin of a hazelnut is bitter, and that's why recipes like the Hazelnut Waffles on p. 68 and the Hazelnut Almond Crescents on p. 59 call for skinning the nuts. Here are two ways to skin them yourself. (For both methods: Let the nuts cool completely before using or before storing in a sealed container in the freezer for up to three months.)



### The toasting method

Spread the nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet and toast in a 375°F oven until the skins are mostly split and the nuts are light golden brown (the skins will look darker) and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Don't overtoast or the nuts will become bitter. Wrap the hot nuts in a clean dishtowel and let them sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Then vigorously rub the nuts against themselves in the towel to remove most of the skins. Try to get at least half of the skins off. This may take a lot of rubbing, so be persistent.



**Pros:** The nuts get toasted and skinned all in one step; uses the oven (which might be heating anyway for whatever you'll be making with the nuts) rather than dirtying a saucepan.

**Cons:** Almost impossible to get the nuts completely skinned; stains a dishtowel (so don't use one you really care about).

### The blanching method

For every ½ cup of hazelnuts, bring 1½ cups water to a boil. Add 2 tablespoons baking soda and the nuts; boil for 3 minutes—expect the water to turn black and watch out for boilovers. Run a nut under cold water and see if the skin slips off easily. If not, boil the nuts a little longer until the skins slip off. Cool the nuts under cold running water, slip off the skins, blot dry, and then toast in a 375°F oven. (This method adapted from *Fine Cooking* contributor Rose Levy Beranbaum.)

**Pro:** Completely skins the nuts.

**Cons:** Each nut must be skinned individually (which is easy but time-consuming if you're skinning a lot of nuts); nuts must be toasted in a separate step; nuts won't be as crisp as with the toasting method.



## A bench knife keeps rolled doughs from sticking



There's nothing worse than rolling out a batch of pie or cookie dough to the perfect shape, only to discover that it's become firmly stuck to the countertop. To avoid this, some bakers recommend rolling dough out between waxed paper or parchment, but we find that the paper often crinkles and gets stuck in the dough. In the test kitchen, we prefer to roll out dough the old-fashioned way—

on a floured work surface. To prevent sticking, we stop between every few passes of the rolling pin to run a bench knife under the dough. If the dough is starting to stick, we lightly re-flour the surface, but we're careful not to use too much flour as this would make the dough too dry. Then, before we use the rolled-out dough, we brush any excess flour from the dough with a pastry brush.



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# How to fill a pastry bag

If you've never done it before, the idea of working with a pastry bag to decorate a cake with icing or to pipe out pâte à choux to make the éclairs on p. 70 might seem a little daunting. But it's actually quite fun, especially once

you get the hang of loading the filling into the bag. Here's how to make this potentially messy step neat and easy:

First, attach the piping tip, using a plastic coupler if need be (consult the instructions that came with your tips). Fold the top of the bag into a wide cuff, and hold the bag under this cuff.

**1** Using a long spatula, transfer the filling into the bag. With the hand holding the bag, pinch the spatula as you pull it out of the bag to slide the filling off the spatula. Once the bag is half full—don't fill it more than halfway or it will be hard to pipe—unfold the cuff, lay the bag on the counter, and use a bench knife or the side of your hand to force the filling into the tip of the bag. **2** Twist the bag closed and, before you begin piping, squeeze a little of the filling into a small bowl to force out any air trapped near the tip.



## For baking, choose cream cheese in bricks

When we test recipes for baked goods that call for cream cheese, we always use regular Philadelphia brand cream cheese—the kind that comes in a brick, not a tub. The cream cheese in a tub is formulated to make it more spreadable than the brick kind. That's fine for your toasted bagel, but it's usually not good when you're using the cream cheese as an ingredient. Take, for example, the Cream Cheese Dough on p. 60: Like the pockets of butter or shortening in pie dough, the distinctive streaks of cream cheese in this dough are what make the finished cookies flaky. Soft cream cheese from a tub won't give you the best results. Nor, for that matter, will reduced-fat or fat-free cream cheese. As for store-brand cream cheeses, we prefer to test with branded products that are nationally available. But if you've used your store's brick cream cheese and know that it produces good results, by all means use it and save yourself a little money.

## what we mean by: Cookie sheet



Left, rimmed baking sheet; right, cookie sheet.

When we call for a cookie sheet in our recipes, we mean the kind of baking sheet that doesn't have a rim all the way around it, shown at near left. A cookie sheet has at least one and as many as three rimless sides, which aid hot-air flow to the cookies, as well as make it easier to remove the cookies from the sheet once they're baked. In many instances, using a rimmed baking sheet (also known as a half sheet pan or a jellyroll pan, shown far left) instead of a cookie sheet won't make any difference, but sometimes it does. Sugar cookies, for instance, don't brown as evenly on a rimmed sheet. So for the very best results from our baking recipes, use a cookie sheet when one is called for.



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tip:

## Peel ginger with a spoon

Of all the little tricks I know for preparing vegetables, one of the handiest is using a spoon to peel fresh ginger. Most people use a paring knife for this task, but the knife usually ends up trimming off some of the inner good stuff, too. If you just scrape the side of a spoon along the ginger, the skin comes right off, leaving all the aromatic flesh behind. Try it once and you'll never go back to using a paring knife.

## Dealing with the sticky stuff

**Make your measuring equipment non-stick.** Sticky ingredients like honey and molasses can be a pain to measure because they stick in the measuring spoon or cup. But if you lightly coat that measuring cup or spoon with a little oil or cooking spray first, the sticky liquids will slide right back out.

**Boil your pot clean.** If you make the Honey Caramels on p. 16, expect the pot and candy thermometer to be pretty messy afterward. But rather than attacking the mess with elbow grease and a scouring pad, try letting fire and water do the work for you: Fill the pot with water, clip the candy thermometer back into position, and bring to a boil. The hot water will dissolve most of the caramel, and all you'll need to do is a little rinsing. This works for any kind of caramel or other candy.

# Cream:

## the thick and the thin of it

Have you ever wondered about the difference between heavy cream and light cream? And what about heavy whipping cream—is that different from heavy cream and whipping cream? We got curious about dairy terminology, so we checked with the USDA to see what it all means. Here's what we learned:

TYPE	MILKFAT CONTENT	TIPS
Heavy cream (aka heavy whipping cream)	At least 36%	Because of its high fat content, it whips fast and firm and is less prone to curdling when reduced, making for thick, velvety, rich sauces.
Light whipping cream (aka whipping cream)	At least 30% but less than 36%	It whips up adequately (cream needs at least 30% fat to whip) and makes for more delicate reduction sauces.
Light cream (aka table cream or coffee cream)	At least 18% but less than 30%	Not enough fat to whip but it can handle slight reduction. We like the subtle richness it adds to soups and stews.
Half-and-half	At least 10.5% but less than 18%	A homogenized blend of milk and cream. Add at the end of cooking for a slightly creamy texture. It also makes for a decadent cup of hot cocoa. Don't try to reduce it—its higher protein content can cause it to coagulate.
Whole milk	A minimum of 3.25%	Commonly homogenized and fortified with vitamin D. Because it's high in protein and low in fat, it will coagulate if you try to boil it in a sauce.

## Ultrapasteurized—what does it mean?

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—Allison Ehri,  
test kitchen associate



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overwhipped cream



rescued whipped cream

## Bringing whipped cream back from the brink

**T**ell me you've never done this before: There you are, whipping cream to go along with your luscious pumpkin pie or other dessert masterpiece, knowing that you're probably getting close to perfect peaks when—whoops!—all of a sudden you push it too far and the cream goes from fluffy to grainy in a split second. Do you quietly curse yourself as you scrape the batch into the trash and pray you have enough cream to

start over again? No, you don't. What you do instead is add a few tablespoons of fresh cream to the overwhipped cream and start whipping again. As long as the overwhipped cream hasn't begun to form clumps of butter-fat (which means it's more than just a little overwhipped and is actually on its way to becoming butter), the fresh cream should quickly smooth out the graininess. But this time, stop whipping before you overdo it again. For extra insurance, you can whip the fresh cream in by hand with a whisk.

## tip: Break eggs on the counter, not on the bowl

Whenever you need to crack open an egg, rap it on a flat surface, like the counter, rather than on the rim of your bowl. Breaking eggs on a bowl rim causes more shell shatter and sometimes drives tiny shell shards—the kind that can be infuriatingly hard to fish out—into the egg white. If you crack your eggs on the counter, shell fragments should appear in your bowl far less often. ♦

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## Caramels, p. 14

You'll find extra-thin confectioners' foils for wrapping caramels at Candylandcrafts.com (908-685-0410), where packages of 125 start at \$1.99. Candy thermometers are available in most kitchenware or baking supply stores, or find a selection online at Cooking.com (800-663-8810).

## Granola, p. 32

The Container Store (Containerstore.com) and Bed, Bath & Beyond (Bedbathandbeyond.com) have a wide range of jars, canisters, and containers to hold your homemade granola.

## Holiday Dinner, p. 38

For Ris Lacoste's Apple Charlottes, you'll need 8-ounce ramekins, which are sold in many kitchenware stores. You can also find them in a variety of colors at Chantal.com (800-365-4354), where they're \$13 for a set of four.

## Holiday Cookies, p. 56

For portioning doughs evenly, a kitchen scale is immensely

helpful. Cooking.com (800-663-8810) carries about two dozen models. In the test kitchen, we've been happy with the Salter 7x7 compact electronic food scale (\$49.95). Cooking.com also carries Chicago Metallic cookie sheets for \$12.95 apiece.

To order turbinado, demerara, sanding, and other decorative sugars, visit ChefTools.com (866-716-2433). For high-quality chocolate, see the source under Éclairs, below.

To give the brownie bowties a zigzag edge, you'll need a pastry wheel. A Cook's Wares (800-915-9788; CooksWares.com) has three brands, ranging in price from \$2.90 to \$19.

If you want to present your cookies elegantly, you can arrange them on a tiered platter. The glass one shown above is \$39.95 at Sur La Table (SurLaTable.com; 800-243-0852); the others are our own, but you can easily find one at online sources like Target.com

(search for a 3-tier platter) or Mikasa.com (search for a 3-tier server).

## Brunch, p. 64

Nicole Rees recommends grinding hazelnuts for the waffle batter with a rotary grater; she likes the Zyliss version, which is \$14.95 at Cutleryandmore.com.

Grade B maple syrup is available at Whole Foods markets and Trader Joe's, and it's also available online. Try Green Mountain Sugar House (GMSH.com; 800-643-9338), where a quart-size container sells for \$20.95.

## Ginger Cookies, p. 44

Crystallized ginger is easy to find in well-stocked supermarkets. GingerPeople.com (800-551-5284) is also a good source; a 9-ounce bag of crystallized ginger is \$7.

Visit BakersCatalogue.com (800-827-6836) for rimmed baking sheets (\$17.95),



## Éclairs, p. 70

To pipe éclair filling, try using a large polyurethane piping bag. They're available in kitchenware stores or online at Fantes.com (800-443-2683); 16-inch bags are \$6.49 apiece. If you prefer disposable plastic pastry bags, the site sells a set of ten for \$4.49. But avoid plastic-coated cloth pastry bags; they're hard to clean and tend to smell sour after a few uses.

You can find a 5/8-inch star tip (to pipe the éclair filling) at most kitchenware stores. Sur

La Table (SurLaTable.com; 800-243-0852) sells a jumbo tip set (\$32.95) that includes the 5/8-inch star tip and comes with eleven other tips in various shapes and sizes.

Carolyn Weil recommends 55% to 63% bittersweet chocolate for her éclairs. To find many high-quality brands of bittersweet chocolate, look to Chocosphere.com (877-992-4626).



nonstick baking liners (from \$15.95), and parchment (\$15.95 for 100 sheets).

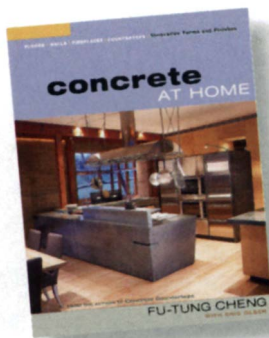
## From Our Test Kitchen,

p. 76

For rimmed baking sheets, see the source in Ginger Cookies above. For unrimmed cookie sheets, see the source in Holiday Cookies, above left.



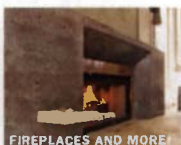
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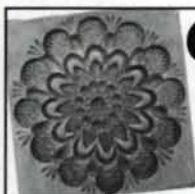
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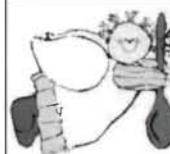
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<b>Chewy Caramels</b>	14												
Honey Caramels		30	15	0	4	2	1	0.5	0	5	15	0	based on 100 servings
Vanilla Tangerine Caramels		30	15	0	4	2	1	0.5	0	5	15	0	based on 100 servings
Honey-Nut Caramels		40	25	0	5	2.5	1.5	1	0	5	20	0	based on 100 servings
<b>Homemade Granola</b>	32												
Maple Walnut Granola w/Dates		250	90	5	38	10	1	2.5	6	0	65	3	per ½ cup serving
Honey Almond Granola		290	150	8	30	17	1.5	9	6	0	90	4	per ½ cup serving
Crispy Sweet Pecan Granola		230	110	4	29	12	1	7	3.5	0	65	4	per ½ cup serving
<b>Home for the Holidays</b>	38												
Wild Rice & Mushroom Soup w/Almonds		570	400	17	30	44	22	16	4	115	480	4	based on 6 servings
Mustard, Sage & Maple-Glazed Pork Roast w/Roasted Potatoes		800	340	64	49	38	13	18	3.5	190	1390	3	based on 6 servings
Sweet-Sour Red Cabbage		250	60	5	46	6	1.5	3.5	1	10	400	2	based on 6 servings
Individual Apple Charlottes		630	280	6	86	32	20	8	2	80	400	5	based on 8 servings, w/o garnish
<b>Ginger Cookies</b>	44												
Double Ginger Crackles		80	25	1	12	3	2	1	0	10	40	0	based on 48 servings
Gingerbread Biscotti		150	35	2	26	4	0	2	1	20	95	1	based on 24 servings
Ginger Snaps		60	20	1	9	2.5	1.5	0.5	0	10	35	0	based on 40 servings
Ginger & Lemon Cookies		120	60	1	14	6	4	1.5	0	30	25	0	based on 30 servings
<b>Cheesecake</b>	48												
New York Style Cheesecake w/Cranberry-Cointreau Sauce		500	250	7	58	28	17	8	1.5	130	250	1	based on 16 servings
<b>Hors d'Oeuvre Menu</b>	50												
Crudités w/Creamy Roquefort Dip		30	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	110	3	based on 16 servings, w/o dip
Creamy Roquefort Dip		25	20	1	0	2	1.5	0.5	0	5	50	0	per 1 Tbs.
Silky Leek & Celery Root Soup		70	45	1	4	5	3	1.5	0	15	85	1	based on 24 servings
Smoked Salmon on Belgian Endive w/Crème Fraiche & Chives		15	10	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	60	0	based on 40 servings
Caramelized Onion & Thyme Tarts		160	90	2	14	11	6	3	0	40	130	1	based on 16 servings
Stuffed Mushrooms w/Pancetta, Shallots & Sage		35	25	1	2	3	1	1.5	0	5	100	0	based on 30 servings
<b>9 Cookies from 3 Doughs</b>	56												
Chocolate Thumbprint Cookies		100	60	1	9	7	3.5	1.5	0	10	20	1	based on 24 servings
Hazelnut Almond Crescents		90	60	1	6	7	2.5	3.5	0.5	10	15	1	based on 28 servings
Almond Sablés		80	40	1	8	4.5	2.5	1.5	0	10	15	0	based on 24 servings
Classic Rugelach		110	60	1	10	7	3.5	1.5	1.5	15	30	0	based on 24 servings
Caramel-Glazed Cardamom Palmiers		80	45	1	9	5	3	1.5	0	15	35	0	based on 26 servings
Brownie Bowties		130	80	2	11	9	6	2.5	0	30	40	1	based on 24 servings
Bittersweet Mocha Cookies		80	40	1	11	4.5	2.5	1	0	10	15	1	based on 28 servings
Chocolate Chunk Cookies w/Dried Cherries & Pecans		90	50	1	11	6	2.5	1.5	0.5	5	15	1	based on 30 servings
Crunchy Cocoa Wafers		50	25	1	7	3	2	1	0	5	15	0	based on 30 servings
<b>Come on Over for Brunch</b>	64												
Spinach & Mushroom Frittata		180	130	9	4	14	7	4.5	1	285	200	1	based on 8 servings
Sparkling Pomegranate Cocktail		130	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	based on 6 servings
Apple, Sage & Fennel Breakfast Sausage		310	200	21	6	22	7	10	4	75	350	1	based on 8 servings
Hazelnut Waffles		290	140	8	30	16	2	8	4.5	75	380	1	based on 12 servings
Berry Compote		90	0	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	per ¼ cup
Crème Fraiche Whipped Cream		20	20	0	1	2	1.5	0.5	0	5	0	0	per 1 Tbs.
<b>Éclairs</b>	70												
Éclairs		270	180	5	19	20	12	5	1	145	150	1	based on 13 servings
<b>Quick &amp; Delicious</b>	90c												
Spiced Mixed Nuts		190	160	4	8	17	3.5	10	3.5	5	110	2	per ¼ cup
Boston Lettuce Wedges w/Mimosa Vinaigrette		280	260	3	3	29	4	22	3	35	200	1	based on 6 servings
Mixed Greens w/Goat Cheese & Orange Fennel Seed Vinaigrette		250	210	5	7	23	5	15	2	10	220	2	based on 6 servings
Roasted Beef Tenderloin w/ Caramelized Shallots & Red Wine		480	300	37	2	33	14	14	1.5	145	370	0	based on 6 servings
Prosciutto Wrapped Halibut w/Sage Butter Sauce		320	150	39	2	17	8	4	2	95	640	0	based on 6 servings
Smashed Parslief Potatoes		260	130	3	30	15	2.5	11	1.5	0	450	3	based on 6 servings
Broccoli w/Black Olives, Garlic & Lemon		170	140	4	8	15	2	11	1.5	0	270	4	based on 6 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.






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In the refrigerated section.



41



59



43



68



47



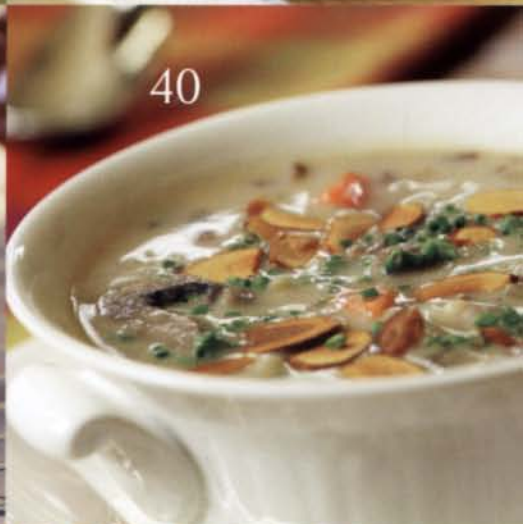
53



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90c





BY JENNIFER MCLAGAN

## This mix & match entertaining menu

lets you choose the flavors you crave while keeping the cooking speedy—each recipe takes less than 45 minutes, and of course you can work on more than one at a time. Start off with a bowlful of addictive spiced nuts (you can make them up to a week in advance). Then pick one starter, one main dish, and one side dish from the recipes here, and you'll have a very special dinner ready in no time. Could holiday entertaining be any easier?

### Menu combinations for any occasion

Mixed Greens with Goat Cheese & Orange-Fennel Seed Vinaigrette

Smashed Parslied Potatoes

Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Caramelized Shallots & Red Wine



Mixed Greens with Goat Cheese & Orange-Fennel Seed Vinaigrette

Broccoli with Black Olives, Garlic & Lemon

Prosciutto-Wrapped Halibut with Sage Butter Sauce



Boston Lettuce Wedges with Mimosa Vinaigrette

Broccoli with Black Olives, Garlic & Lemon

Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Caramelized Shallots & Red Wine



## Spiced Mixed Nuts

*Yields 4 cups.*

**1 lb. (4 cups) mixed unsalted nuts (such as cashews, macadamias, walnuts, pecans, or almonds)**

**½ tsp. ground coriander**

**½ tsp. ground cumin**

**2 Tbs. unsalted butter**

**2 Tbs. dark brown sugar**

**2 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary**

**¼ tsp. cayenne**

**1½ tsp. kosher salt**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Scatter the nuts on a rimmed baking sheet and bake, shaking the sheet a couple of times during baking, until the nuts are nicely toasted, 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, set a small heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle in the coriander and cumin and toast until aromatic, about 30 seconds. Remove the pan from the heat and add the butter, brown sugar, rosemary, and cayenne. Return the skillet to low heat and stir until the butter melts

and the sugar dissolves, 2 to 2½ minutes. Keep warm.

Tip the nuts into a large warmed bowl, pour the warm spiced butter over the nuts, and add the salt. Stir until the nuts are well coated. Taste for seasoning and add more salt if necessary. Let the nuts cool completely.

The nuts can be made up to a week in advance; store in an airtight container.

**Tip:** Tossing the warm nuts in a warmed bowl helps the spiced butter coat the nuts evenly.

**Variation:** You can use any combination of unsalted nuts you like but avoid Brazil nuts; their high oil content makes the coating slide off of them.



# **Boston Lettuce Wedges with Mimosa Vinaigrette**

*Serves six.*

- 1 large egg**
- 3 small heads Boston lettuce**
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**
- 1½ Tbs. Dijon mustard**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 1 Tbs. finely chopped shallot**

Put the egg in a small saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil, cover the saucepan, and remove it from the heat. Let stand, covered, for 15 minutes.

While the egg cooks, remove any damaged leaves from the lettuce heads and trim their bases. Cut each head through the core into four wedges. Rinse under cold water, shake gently to get rid of excess water, and then set the wedges on a clean dishcloth to drain, cut side down.

In a small bowl, whisk the lemon juice and mustard. Add ½ tsp. salt and a few grinds of pepper and then whisk in the oil in a slow, steady stream. Stir in the parsley and shallot.

Drain the egg and cool it under cold running water. Remove the shell and separate the white from the yolk. Using the back of a spoon, press the egg white through a fine sieve. Repeat with the egg yolk. Stir the sieved egg into the dressing and taste for seasoning.

Arrange two lettuce wedges on each of six large salad plates and spoon the dressing over them. Serve immediately.

**Tip:** An older egg will be easier to peel.



# **Mixed Greens with Goat Cheese & Orange-Fennel Seed Vinaigrette**

*Serves six.*

- 7 to 8 oz. (7 to 8 lightly packed cups) mixed greens, washed and spun dry**
- 2 large navel oranges, rinsed**
- 1 Tbs. white-wine vinegar**
- 1½ tsp. fennel seeds, coarsely chopped**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- ¼ lb. creamy goat cheese**

Put the greens in a large salad bowl. Finely grate the zest of 1 orange (you should have about 1 Tbs.) and put it into a small bowl.

Slice the ends off both oranges with a small, sharp knife. Stand the fruit on one of its cut ends and slice off the skin in strips (try to get all the bitter white pith). Working over a medium bowl, cut the segments free from the membrane, letting each segment fall into the bowl as you go. Remove any seeds from the segments. Squeeze the membranes to extract the juice—you'll need about 3 Tbs. juice for the vinaigrette.

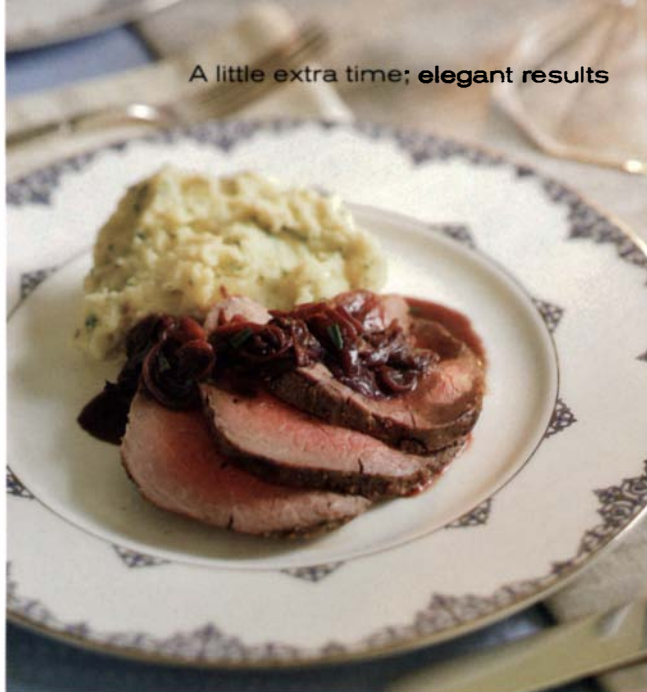
Add the 3 Tbs. orange juice to the bowl with the zest, along with the vinegar and fennel seeds. Season with ½ tsp. salt and several grinds of pepper. Whisk in the olive oil in a slow, steady stream. Check the seasoning and add more salt and pepper to taste.

Add the orange segments to the bowl of mixed greens. Pour the vinaigrette over the salad and toss. Crumble half of the goat cheese over the top and toss again to mix. Portion the salad among six salad plates and crumble the remaining cheese over the salads.

**Tip:** Because salad mixes come in packages, they save time, but be sure they're absolutely fresh: One rotten leaf can spoil a salad. You can also make your own mix of your favorite salad leaves.



A little extra time; elegant results



## Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Caramelized Shallots & Red Wine

*Serves six.*

**1 2½- to 3-lb. beef tenderloin roast (preferably the head piece), trimmed of silverskin, at room temperature**

**1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**4 Tbs. cold unsalted butter**  
**3 large shallots, halved and thinly sliced lengthwise (about 1 cup)**

**¾ cup dry red wine, preferably a fruity California Cabernet Sauvignon**

**1 sprig fresh rosemary, plus ½ tsp. chopped**

**¾ cup homemade or low-salt beef broth**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Brush or rub the beef with the oil and put the beef in a 9x13-inch roasting pan lined with aluminum foil. Season the beef generously with salt and pepper.

Roast the beef until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F to 125°F for rare, about 25 minutes; 125°F to 130°F for medium rare, about 30 minutes. (The temperature of the beef will rise 5°F as it rests.) Wrap the beef in the foil that lines the pan and let rest on a carving board for 10 to 15 minutes.

While the beef roasts, make the sauce. Melt 2 Tbs. of the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook, stirring often, until they soften and turn golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the wine and the rosemary sprig and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil until the volume of wine and shallots reduces to ½ cup, about 3 minutes. Add the broth and continue to boil until the sauce is reduced to 1 cup, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low. Remove the rosemary sprig and stir in the chopped rosemary. Cut the remaining 2 Tbs. cold butter into small cubes and add a few of them at a time to the sauce, stirring to melt each addition.

Unwrap the tenderloin and stir any accumulated juices into the sauce. Season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper. Slice the meat and serve with the sauce.

**Tip:** It's important to let the beef rest before slicing it; this allows the juices to redistribute from the outside of the roast throughout the whole roast, making this lean cut very juicy.



## Prosciutto-Wrapped Halibut with Sage Butter Sauce

*Serves six.*

**2 large lemons**  
**6 1-inch-thick skinless halibut fillets (about 6 oz. each)**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**36 fresh medium sage leaves**  
**6 thin slices imported prosciutto**  
**6 Tbs. unsalted butter**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Slicing crosswise, cut six ¼-inch rounds from the center of one of the lemons. Repeat with the remaining lemon. Squeeze the juice from the ends of the lemons into a small bowl (you'll need 4 tsp.) and set aside. Arrange the lemon rounds in slightly overlapping pairs on a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet.

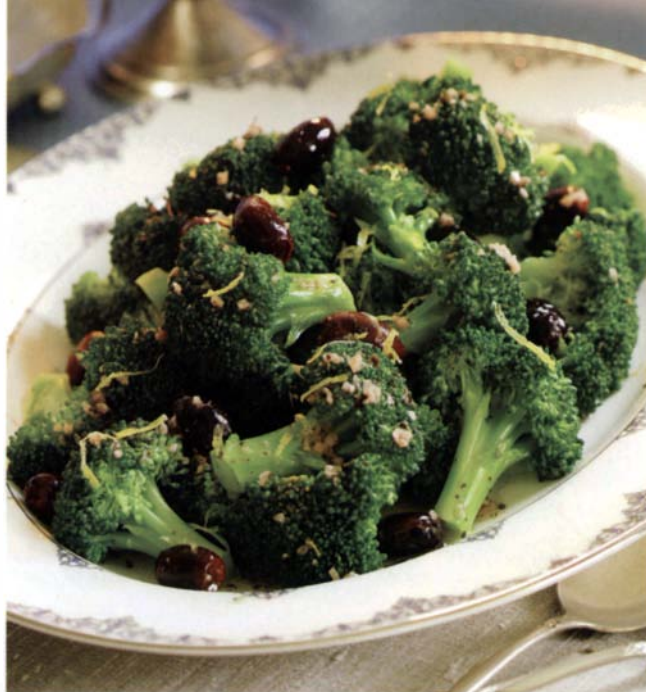
Season the fish with salt and pepper. Set two sage leaves on top of each fillet and then wrap each fillet with a slice of prosciutto. The prosciutto should form a belt, enclosing the leaves but leaving the fish exposed at either end. Lay one wrapped fillet on top of each pair of lemon

slices. Bake until the fish is cooked through (it should flake and be opaque in the thickest part), 15 to 20 minutes depending on the thickness of the fillets.

While the fish is cooking, melt the butter in a 10-inch skillet over medium-low heat. Add the remaining sage leaves and cook, turning once, until the leaves are crisp and the butter begins to brown, about 7 minutes. Add the 4 tsp. lemon juice to the butter and season with ¼ tsp. salt or to taste.

Arrange each fillet (on its lemon slices) on each of six dinner plates. Pour any juices from the fish into the butter sauce in the skillet. Reheat the sauce if necessary. Spoon some of the sauce and a few sage leaves over each fillet and serve.

**Tip:** Make sure all your halibut fillets are similar in size and thickness so that they cook in the same time. You could also use any firm flesh white fish for this recipe.



## Smashed Parslied Potatoes

*Serves six.*

**2 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes**  
(about 5 medium), peeled  
**Kosher salt**  
**1 bay leaf**  
**3 medium cloves garlic, thinly sliced**  
**½ cup whole milk**  
**2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
**6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

Cut the potatoes into 1½-inch chunks and put them in a large saucepan. Add 1 Tbs. salt, the bay leaf, garlic, and enough water to cover the potatoes by 1 inch. Bring to a boil over high heat. When the water begins to boil, lower the heat to a simmer and cook until the potatoes are completely tender when pierced with a fork, 15 to 18 minutes.

Drain the potatoes and garlic in a colander. Discard the bay leaf. Return the potatoes and garlic to the pan over medium heat and stir occasionally until they're no longer steaming profusely

(a little steam is fine) and the potatoes dry out, about 3 minutes. Mash with a potato masher (the mash should be somewhat coarse).

Heat the milk in a small saucepan or in the microwave on high for 1 minute. Add 1 tsp. salt to the milk, stir to dissolve, and, using a spatula, slowly stir the milk into the potato mixture. Stir in the parsley and olive oil. Season with several grinds of pepper and more salt to taste if needed.

If you're not serving the potatoes immediately, keep them warm in a metal bowl covered with a saucepan lid. Put the bowl over a saucepan filled with an inch of simmering water and set over low heat.

**Tip:** Be gentle when adding ingredients to the mashed potatoes—overworking will make the potatoes gluey.

## Broccoli with Black Olives, Garlic & Lemon

*Serves six.*

**1½ lb. broccoli crowns**  
**⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**⅓ cup pitted Kalamata olives**  
**1 small to medium clove garlic, finely chopped**  
**½ tsp. kosher salt**  
**½ tsp. crumbled dried oregano**  
**1 medium lemon**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**  
**1½ Tbs. chopped fresh oregano**

In a large pot (one that accommodates your steamer), bring about 2 inches of water to a boil over high heat.

Meanwhile, trim and cut the broccoli into 2- to 3-inch florets. When the water is boiling, steam the broccoli in a steamer basket until it's just cooked, 7 to 9 minutes.

While the broccoli steams, heat the oil in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the olives, garlic, salt, and dried oregano. Cook until the garlic is lightly colored,

3 to 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat. Finely grate the zest from the lemon; set aside. Squeeze 4 tsp. juice from the lemon and add the juice to the oil. Season with pepper.

Spread the broccoli on a warmed serving platter. Reheat the dressing until it begins to bubble and then pour it over the broccoli. Sprinkle with the lemon zest and fresh oregano. Serve immediately.

**Note:** Use good-quality pitted olives or pit your own by crushing them with the flat side of a chef's knife and removing the pit.